

HABITAT II: RE-ALLOCATION OF THE MILITARY BUDGET

Posted by Joan Russow
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"To address the urgency" none of the actions required nor all of them combined- is expensive in the context of...military expenditures. A few would require little or not additional financial resources in that they involve changes in lifestyles, social norms or government policies that can be largely brought about and sustained through greater citizen action and political leadership (Programme of action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, 1994)

REDUCTION OF THE MILITARY BUDGET

Cities will be habitable when there is the international political will to make fundamental global change to provide for essential needs. Both humans and ecosystems have basic identifiable needs for survival and quality of life and function.

Concerned that currently (1996) the Global Community spends \$860 billion on the military

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budget at a time when the right to housing, the right to food, the right to health care, the right to equality of all , the right to education, the right to safe drinking water, and the right to a safe environment have not been fulfilled.

Aware that in 1976 at Habitat 1, member states of the United Nations affirmed the following in relation to the military budget:

"The waste and misuse of resources in war and armaments should be prevented. All countries should make a firm commitment to promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, in particular in the field of nuclear disarmament. Part of the resources thus released should be utilized so as to achieve a better quality of life for humanity and particularly the peoples of developing countries" (II, 12 Habitat 1).

Noting that the commitment was further made to transfer a substantial proportion of the military budget to social programs (as undertaken through expectations created in general Assembly resolutions from 1981)

Noting also that in 1981, in general assembly resolution entitled the reduction of the military budget, the majority of the member states did the following:

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(i) reaffirmed the urgent need to reduce the military budget, and agreed to freeze and reduce the military budget.

(ii) Recognised that the military budget constituted a heavy burden for the economies of all nations, and have extremely harmful consequences on international peace and security.

(iii) undertook to make a collective effort aimed at strengthening peace and international security by eliminating the threat of war.

(iv) Reiterated the appeal to all States, in particular the most heavily armed States, pending the conclusion of agreements on the reduction of military expenditures, to exercise self-restraint in their military expenditures with a view to reallocating the funds thus saved to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries

Reminded that this request for transfer of the funds from the military budget was further reinforced in a 1983 General Resolution on the Relationship between disarmament and development, that curbing the arms build-up would make it possible to release additional resources for use in economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of the

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developing countries. Also in this resolution state considered that the magnitude of military expenditures is now such that their various implications can no longer be ignored in the efforts pursued in the international community to secure the recovery of the world economy and the establishment of a new international economic order.

Also in 1992, all member states recognized that "Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development" (Rio Declarations. Principle 24, UNCED, 1992), and in Chapter 33, of Agenda 21, member states of the United Nations made a commitment to the "the reallocation of resources presently committed to military purposes" (33.18e)

In 1994, in adopting the statement from the International Conference on Population and Development, the member states of the United Nations concurred that the attainment of "quantitative and qualitative goals of the present Programme of Action clearly require additional resources, some of which could become available from a reordering of priorities at the individual, national and international levels. However, none of the actions required—nor all of them combined— is expensive in the context of either current global development or military expenditures." (Article 1.19)

In 1995, similarly, states in adopting the statement from the Social Development Summit endorsed the calling for "the reallocation of military spending to ensure a greater pocket of resources to expand public services. Again, in 1995, member states of the United Nations reconfirmed these commitments by adopting the Platform of Action at the UN conference on Women, Equality, Development and Peace. In the Platform of Action, States have made a commitment to maintain "peace and security at the global, regional and local levels, together with the prevention of policies of aggression ... and the resolution of armed conflict" (Art. 14) and to reduce "...military expenditures" (Art. 15), states have also made a commitment to the "prevention and resolution of conflicts" (Art.15) and to "increase and hasten, ... the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes" (145a).

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We call upon the member states of the United Nations

- to immediately reduce the military budget to 50% of what it currently is and to transfer these funds into socially equitable and environmentally sound development

- to embark on plans for military conversion with the remaining 50%, and with the setting up of alternative structures for preventing conflict and war through an international regime that respects the rule of international law, and through establishing an international court of compliance where citizens could take evidence of state non-compliance with international law