



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

**High-Level Event “Rising Military Expenditures: Alternatives to Achieve
Durable Security”**

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Opening Remarks
As delivered



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Excellencies,
Distinguished parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this High-Level Event entitled “Rising Military Expenditures: Alternatives to Achieve Durable Security”.

Let me begin by expressing sincere gratitude to our co-organizers: the Government of Mexico - we run into each other all the time because we think alike. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance for convening this important discussion. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the Open Society Foundations for their support.

I am particularly pleased to welcome the distinguished parliamentarians joining us today. As military budgets increase around the world, the role of parliaments in ensuring accountability, transparency and informed debate on national priorities, I think, becomes ever more important.

We meet at a moment when the world is spending more on its militaries than at any point in history. The question before us is not only whether this makes us safer, but what kind of security we are actually building.

Governments have a responsibility to protect their populations and ensure the integrity of their territories and other interests. Yet, growing military expenditures, sometimes to the detriment of important priorities such as development, social welfare programs, require us to consider how best to balance investments in defence with investments in peace and sustainable development.

This discussion comes at a particularly important moment. We are living through a period of profound global transformation. Geopolitical tensions are intensifying, strategic competition is growing and new technologies are reshaping the nature of warfare. At the same time, conflicts continue to devastate communities, humanitarian needs are growing, inequality is deepening and climate-related risks are accelerating. These challenges do not exist in isolation in our view. They are increasingly interconnected and they demand collective responses.

Yet while these challenges demand greater investment in people and prevention, global military spending continues to rise and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals remains off track. Really, really off track. This is not only a development challenge. It is a fundamental question about how we understand and pursue security as well.

These issues are central to the Secretary-General's report, which some of us worked together on, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, launched in September last year.

The report reminds us that investments in military alone do not necessarily produce greater security. Militarized competition and arms races have historically increased insecurity by reducing trust and raising the risk of conflict.

Durable security requires investments in prevention, education, healthcare, climate adaptation, economic opportunity, and social cohesion. Defence can help address immediate threats. But development addresses the conditions that often give rise to insecurity and helps build resilience over the long-term.

Achieving that broader vision of security requires good governance and the effective management of resources guided by transparency, accountability and responsible oversight.

Parliaments play a critical role, obviously. A critical role in representing citizens, influencing national budget allocation, and ensuring, of course, accountability.

They are uniquely positioned to scrutinize defence budgets, approve procurement plans and monitor expenditures, helping to align military spending with national priorities.

Effective parliamentary oversight supports the rational allocation of limited public resources, curbs corruption and bolsters the credibility of State institutions.

And of course, transparency is essential to that effort.

Access to reliable information enables informed debate, strengthens public trust, and supports accountability. It allows citizens and their representatives to better understand how resources are being allocated and whether policies are delivering the intended outcomes.

Ultimately, we must counter the idea that transparency and oversight are obstacles to security. They are indispensable components of sustainable security.

It will help ensure that resources are used wisely.

Distinguished participants,

We need a renewed understanding of security, one that is multidimensional and people-centred. One that recognizes the value of prevention, dialogue, cooperation, sustainable development and disarmament. Security is not kept or built only by the strength of armed forces. It is built by the resilience of societies, the trust between peoples and institutions, and the opportunities available to future generations.

So, I hope today's discussion will help advance a broader conversation about how we invest in the security we truly need, and how we can build a more peaceful, sustainable and secure future for all.

I wish you a productive and constructive meeting and I am really looking forward to what we will be coming up with in terms of new ideas and proposals.