



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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135th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 23 – 27.10.2016

Informal panel discussion: *How to reconcile growing military expenditures with the realization of our sustainable development commitments?*

Tuesday, 25 October (4.30 – 6.30 p.m.)

Rooms 3 and 4, level 0, CICG

Languages: English and French

Organized by the IPU and the International Peace Bureau

Concept Note

We live in a time of extraordinary riches. However, every important cause seems to lack money, be it the Sustainable Development Goals, the Green Climate Fund, or the needs identified by the World Humanitarian Summit.

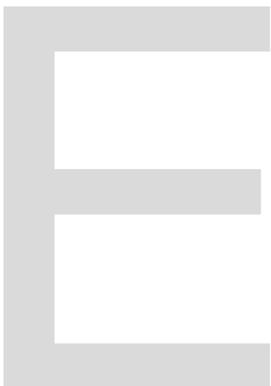
At the same time, the world's governments spend USD 1,700 billion every year on their military forces. That is even more than at the peak of the Cold War. As geopolitical tensions rise, the arms industry and other institutions are exerting strong pressures on politicians to spend more. In certain states, a substantial portion of military expenditure goes to the research and development of nuclear weapons that can never be used, and to the development of controversial new weapons systems such as “killer robots”.

A growing number of voices are challenging these priorities. These voices come from civil society, but also from some governments and certainly many parliaments. The evidence is there for all to see that military solutions are ill-adapted to today's security issues. Kofi Annan described them as “problems without passports”: climate change, transnational terrorist networks, organized crime, pandemics and others.

This is a complex area, given that it involves threat perceptions, defence doctrines, historical roles, alliance loyalties, budget capacity and vested interests. It is therefore all the more important that parliamentarians carefully consider their oversight role, and share their experiences of exercising control over budget questions.

Key questions:

- How do parliaments address budget issues? Is there a thorough process to assess conflicting demands on the overall budget? Those demands could include social, environmental, development or human rights programmes that compete with the military for national resources.
- What specific steps can parliamentarians take to ensure democratic control over the defence budget? What forms of technical support might be requested so that parliamentarians can engage more fully?
- What steps are taken to limit overspending and waste in the defence sector, and to curb corrupt practices?
- What measures have been most successful in identifying military-related spending that falls outside the defence budget itself?
- What is the relationship between debates in parliaments and discussions among the wider public?



#IPU135