



41, rue de Zurich
1201 Geneva
Switzerland
+41 (0) 22 731 64 29
mailbox@ipb.org
www.ipb.org

International Peace Bureau
Statement on the UN session of 23 January, New York:
Responsible governance on disarmament and non-proliferation for progress
and sustainable development

The IPB welcomes with considerable enthusiasm the initiative of the Missions of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Suriname, together with UNDP, to develop a dialogue on themes related to the economy of militarism and the economy of development.

The subject chosen echoes the linkage that we have ourselves made through our programme **‘Disarmament for Development’**. Through this action programme we have attempted to draw attention to three key issues:

1. The wide disparity between the resources devoted to the military system and those invested in the pursuit of the SDGs;
2. The negative effects on development of weaponry of all kinds;
3. The doctrines and postures that favour increasing military spending and employment of such weapons, instead of adopting a human security approach to conflict.

Over the last 12 years, IPB has concentrated on research, education and grassroots mobilization around these issues, notably via the **Global Campaign on Military Spending**. We have now reached a new stage, that of developing a dialogue with, and between, governments – together with new forms of engagement with the UN and its diverse organs.

We are under no illusions that the kind of transformation called for in our own programme (for example, a reallocation of 10% of military spending towards sustainable development), or the 1% contribution called for by the Government of Kazakhstan, will be easily adopted. The tensions we see growing between major states in 2016-17 are leading us towards a new age of military conflict. And when major states are involved, the threat of nuclear conflagration is never far away. For this reason IPB is opposed to the 2% of GDP guideline of NATO, which is putting pressure on member states to increase their military budgets; and to the recent military deployments in Eastern Europe by both sides in the growing conflict.

However our view is that what is needed is not simply a matter of achieving a new agreement to limit, or eliminate, weapons of mass destruction. There is a close link between nuclear and

conventional weapons, and between the resort to increased armament and feelings of insecurity. It is therefore at the roots of the problem that we should be investing our resources. These include, among others:

- Tackling mass poverty via sustainable development programmes;
- Limiting climate change, now recognized as a seriously aggravating factor in a range of conflict conditions;
- Fostering programmes of cooperation, joint economic initiatives, cultural exchanges and similar measures, in order to reduce tensions between peoples; while promoting conflict-analysis and peace education for all;
- Investing in employment and cultural projects to benefit a young generation who risk engaging in desperate acts when confronted with a horizon devoid of opportunity.

We understand the objection that goes by the name of protecting budgetary sovereignty. But states are in fact already limiting their own sovereignty in all kinds of ways in the interest of finding common agreements. That is the nature of today's multilateral diplomacy.

There are a variety of specific solutions that we hope will be explored in this brainstorming session, such as focusing the funds released from the military specifically on efforts to fulfil SDG 16; and/or employing other contributory mechanisms.

At the heart of the problematic presented in this initiative is the issue of transparency. We salute those responsible for creating the **UN Annual Report on Military Spending**, for it has provided a vital tool for fostering improved confidence between states. It needs to be fully supported by all, and it needs to be extended further in order to reflect better the political realities – for example extra-budget spending on military projects.

IPB believes that states are unlikely to achieve the reallocation of priorities described in this dialogue without the participation of civil society. Insecurity is first of all a perception, a feeling, experienced by ordinary people. This is often manipulated by politicians through 'turning up the volume' of rhetoric directed against neighbours or rivals. A shouting match can then easily lead to a shooting match. But warfare is in no-one's interest. The best civil society mobilisations call for peaceful solutions based on justice for all. Those involved know instinctively that the choice of many politicians -- pouring billions and billions more into the military system in the name of 'making their country great' – serves only to inflame tensions and imperil us all.

IPB believes that preparations for warfare in the 21st century are simply outdated, as well as inadequate in solving our problems, and dangerous. It is time to define new priorities and we look to our governments to heed this call before it is too late.
