



Global Day of Action on Military Spending

Newsletter

December 2012

GDAMS 2013: 15 April



Dear GDAMS partner,

It is a pleasure to embark on the next GDAMS journey with you! Our call on all governments to change their budget priorities to fulfil real human needs instead of spending money on their defence is still very timely and needs to be repeated. Our next Global Day of Action on Military Spending will take place on **Monday, 15 April 2013** and we are gradually getting ready for it.

Together with **Peace Action**, the **International Peace Bureau** will coordinate the international events, give you some political background, arrange for you to get the SIPRI summary sheet before the official release of the data and send you all the necessary tools for your local events. While encouraging you to use your own advocacy strategies and to adapt your message to your local context, we are trying to come up with an action that could easily be implemented by all of us. We thought this would be a good way for us to feel and show the world that we are part of a global effort to reduce military spending. We will inform you about this action in one of our upcoming newsletters and we promise that you will have fun doing it...

Now, as the international community is discussing the development framework that will replace the **Millennium Development Goals after 2015**, it is important to make our voices heard and ensure that our issues are taken into consideration during these debates. In this issue, Colin Archer gives us the International Peace Bureau's perspective.

We are happy to have you on board and hope that many more organizations and individuals join us to spread the call for reducing military spending. Please promote GDAMS on your website, through emailing, social media and in publication materials and encourage other groups to participate. The more the merrier!

Hopefully, you and your friends and colleagues will enjoy the ride!

The GDAMS team

GDAMS 2.0: At a glance

The last annual **Global Day of Action on Military Spending** was a big success and will hopefully inspire groups around the world to even greater action in 2013. It took place on 17 April and over 140 events were organized on nearly every continent. The day was endorsed by the United Nations and the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Angela Kane, made a statement supporting our efforts to shift resources from the military sector to development. Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias also issued a special video message to encourage participation. GDAMS 2.0 attracted media coverage all over the world.

It took place on Tax Day in the United States where dozens of actions brought together peace and economic justice activists around a common message: **cut the military budget and support human needs.**

The actions that were organized around the world on the Global Day of Action were united in message but diverse in presentation. There were panel discussions, street performances, leafleting, name-and-shame exercises, village rallies, videos, petitions, and much more. All these various events highlighted the latest totals for global military expenditure: more than \$1.7 trillion for 2011.



Activists on GDAMS 2012 in New Delhi

What should be done with military money?

Colin Archer, Secretary-General, International Peace Bureau

As austerity cuts bite hard into welfare provision, it is natural that the argument should be put forward that any reductions in military spending should be transferred to domestic programmes. At the same time, development cooperation agencies are working hard to defend their budgets also. They often depend on co-funding from government foreign aid departments, which has also been subject to reductions in many rich countries since the onset of the economic crisis.

In IPB's view, there should be no contradiction between these two objectives. Serious reductions in military spending should mean substantial amounts are freed up for both purposes. However, we all know that usually the cuts are ways to simply reduce the overall national debt – i.e. it is swallowed up without an equivalent sum being allocated to another budget heading. Our GDAMS message is therefore that **simply applying the recipe of the International Monetary Fund or the European Central Bank is not acceptable. More cuts means less spending and less jobs!**

Some have asked us if it is 'OK' to focus attention on reallocating military resources to domestic projects, rather than international development. The answer is: of course. IPB supports both transfers to domestic programmes (health, education, employment, green energy, housing etc) and transfers to development programmes abroad. It should not have to be a choice between the two! But we understand that different political contexts require different strategies and tactics. The important thing is to **find ways to reach out and engage a wide variety of new partners so that our collective voices become more powerful.**

IPB's own plan for GDAMS 2013 is to conduct our advocacy work at two levels: national and international. In most democratic countries the main decisions on military budgets are taken by parliaments, with inputs from government, military, lobbyists and analysts. There is no international body of law that constrains these decisions. However, the evolution of the debate on the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals after 2015 could bring in an important new external factor.

As our readers may be aware, the international community is right now engaged in a major consultation to elaborate the new UN development framework. IPB believes it is important to make our voices heard **by urging that the military spending issue is taken up during these debates.** There is some urgency here: in the first part of 2013 the High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda will report to the UN Secretary-General. This report will be influential in determining the issues that the UNGA chooses to adopt later in the year. IPB has recently published a report on this topic entitled 'Opportunity Costs: Military Spending and the UN's Development Agenda'. It reports on **trends in military spending, evaluations of the MDGs and proposed SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), calculations of the costs of development and the proposal to use military spending as an innovative finance mechanism.** We also discuss some of the contrary arguments. This is a vital tool in the GDAMS toolbox!

The document is designed for advocacy work at the international level as well as for our partner organizations to lobby their national governments. To compile this publication, we have worked with supportive governments and UN agencies.

We reached out to the UN System Task Team and other key staff, especially within the Office of Disarmament Affairs, which has shown great interest in our programme. The launch of the report, held on 29 November in Geneva, was attended by states, UN agencies, academics and NGOs.

If you would like to work with us on this aspect of the work, i.e., inserting military expenditures in the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda, during the run-up to GDAMS in April, please get in touch with the IPB Secretariat, secgen@ipb.org

And let us keep the debates going!

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