

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON MILITARY SPENDING (GCOMS)

Have you ever thought that the world spends too much on war and militarism? Millions of people share this point of view but it has yet to become a major political debating point. We aim to change all that! The issue is especially relevant in a period in which tensions between major states, and between governments and violent fundamentalists, are becoming increasingly militarised. Pressure to spend more taxpayers' money on weapons and warfare is growing. The current situation is also the result of past military spending.

In December 2014, the International Peace Bureau (IPB) announced the launch of a permanent, global, year-round campaign to tackle the worldwide issue of excessive military spending. In 2013 the world's governments spent over USD 1700 billion on the military sector. This is money that could instead be spent on creating jobs for young people, feeding the hungry, protecting us all from the effects of climate change, tackling ebola...and much more. IPB has for several years called for annual reallocations of (as a minimum) 10% from the military budgets of all states; and for a process to be started to reduce arms production as well as the international weapons trade.

The Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) builds on over a decade of work done by IPB and others around the theme of 'Disarmament for Sustainable Development'. It incorporates the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) – now in its 5th year, whose goals it shares and which is also coordinated by the IPB.



What are our goals?

The overall goal is to achieve major re-allocations of military expenditures (especially in high-spending countries) to 4 broad alternative areas:

- a. Peace: disarmament, conflict prevention and resolution, human security;
 - b. Sustainable development and anti-poverty programmes;
 - c. Climate change and biodiversity loss – for mitigation and adaptation;
 - d. Social justice/welfare, human rights, gender equality and green job-creation
- all the above as part of a wider global transformation towards a culture of peace.

The main intermediate goals are to have an influence on key international debates:

- **Development:** to ensure the inclusion of language relating to military spending and disarmament in the UN's Post 2015 Development Agenda;

- **Climate:** to ensure that the target of \$100 bn in annual governmental contributions to the Green Climate Fund is met by the date of the COP 21 (Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) in Dec. 2015. These contributions should come from reductions in military budgets.

Given that the political situation varies from country to country, and that we lack any inter-governmental agreement or treaty to limit military spending, national-level action is vital. Each campaigning centre needs to define its own targets and approach. IPB's role is to provide an overall framework and give assistance in a variety of ways.

Example: Some groups use the slogan 'Move the Money!', others 'Redirect Military Expenditure' or 'Action against Military Spending'. There are demands for various levels of reallocations. Different things work well in different places. Our hope is that all will recognize their programmes within the GCOMS umbrella grouping.

What are our objectives?

The campaign has 4 main purposes:

1. To extend the global community of activism concerned with this issue;
2. To reach a wide general public and help them express their views;
3. To successfully lobby politicians and other decision makers;
4. To engage both the mainstream and the alternative/civil society media in covering the debate and giving space to those favourable to the GCOMS perspective.



How will change come about?

IPB's intention is to foster synergies both within each country and internationally so as to gradually strengthen the global movement challenging militarism. This can be done in many ways and each activist or group may have a different focus. The GCOMS campaign aims to help its participants move step by step, each time into a higher gear.

Example: What may start out as a small scale street action could lead to a series of well-attended public seminars or pieces of published research. This in turn could develop into a national coalition, once sufficient outreach is done to draw in different civil society sectors. This coalition could begin a programme of national media activity, combined with lobby work at the parliament which results, initially in a controversy or major policy debate, and ultimately in a switch of government priorities.

How can we lift the issue up?

Right now the issue of military spending is not prominent in national discourses – it rises to the top of the media agenda only occasionally: for instance when a war is announced, a budget decision reaches a crunch, or geo-political tensions rise. Our aim is to make it a controversial debate in which every citizen's voice can count. Over the coming years we will give the issue more visibility, through:

- ongoing campaigning;
- ever-bigger GDAMS actions;
- our contributions to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Climate Change debates; and
- a major conference-process (including preparatory workshops) in late September 2016 in Berlin.

Ideas for this event are already being developed. Locations, timing, partners, media engagement and funding are all under consideration. Two possible outcomes are: an Observer Committee of international personalities, and an International Declaration demanding reductions in military budgets and proposals for re-investing the resources in programmes to address social and environmental need.

Who are the partners?

Such an ambitious shift in priorities will require help from many areas of society. Right now, IPB has 300 member organisations, and there are also around 100 other groups involved in putting on GDAMS events. In addition we aim to widen our base and engage with significant players in sectors such as:

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| ▪ Peace & disarmament | ▪ Political parties |
| ▪ Development | ▪ Women |
| ▪ Environment | ▪ Researchers in related fields |
| ▪ Social Justice | ▪ Professionals/ scientists/ economists |
| ▪ Labour | ▪ Media workers / educators / celebrities |
| ▪ Faith | |
| ▪ Youth | |

At the more official level, we are already engaging in dialogue with Parliamentarians, Governments/diplomats, International/UN agencies, and (ex-)Military.

What do partners gain from being part of the campaign?

Military spending is a worldwide problem and cannot be tackled only at home – even if the main decisions are made in capitals. But security is a shared issue and campaigners are often inspired by actions and creative ideas from elsewhere. An ongoing, coordinated global effort can help shine a spotlight on what each group is doing and create a greater sense of momentum.

How will we communicate?

Every campaign requires good communications strategies. In this case we will encourage work at the national level in particular, since that is where the primary political decisions on military spending are taken. Message types will include both the formal and the informal: from written reports to video clips and 'selfies'. Our platforms will range from mainstream press and TV to social media and social movement communications of all types.

Example: At the New York conference just before the People's Climate March in September 2014, IPB presented a major new report on the links between military spending and climate change. This was accompanied by a workshop, networking, and email/social media distribution.

How is it organised?

The IPB itself has over 300 member organisations in 70 countries. In addition, there are nearly 100 partner organisations engaged in the annual GDAMS project. All are welcome to join! Just drop us a line at: mailbox@ipb.org. The GCOMS is run by a steering group of activists from all over world, and is coordinated by the IPB Secretariat in Geneva.

Funding support has been received over the past couple of years from the Polden-Puckham Charitable Trust (UK); Rissho-Kosei Kai (Japan); and the estate of the late Prof. Kingsley Price (USA). Further contributions from individuals, organisations and foundations are most welcome.

Invitation

We invite all those who share our perspective to make contact with the IPB Secretariat in the coming weeks and months and to consider how they can contribute to this important and ground-breaking international effort.

More information at:

Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) www.demilitarize.org/
<https://www.facebook.com/globaldayofactiononmilitaryspending>

International Peace Bureau www.ipb.org
<https://www.facebook.com/ipb1910>