



# CARBON NEUTRAL PEACE AND DEFENCE

A suggested category addition to UNFCCC Topic List

What is it and why do we need it?

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**TIPPING POINT NORTH SOUTH**

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## WHAT IS CARBON NEUTRAL PEACE AND DEFENCE AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

**The world's militaries are the biggest institutional users of oil in the world.**

We have collectively and consistently ignored the massive yet unaccounted for historic and present-day responsibility of the world's militaries for climate change, from their day-to-day operational activities to the wars and conflicts of which they are part (and post-conflict carbon burden of reconstruction).

While some nations are aware that the climate change imperative impacts on their military, the solutions on offer are far from adequate.

A carbon-neutral world demands we fully *decarbonise* our militaries. All those advocating the diversification of the defence and security industries must also decarbonise so that they are fit for the green new world. Furthermore, a decarbonised military, defence and security sector is not about delivering 'greener ways to conduct war': weaponry and war will always kill living beings, will always destroy and pollute environments.

Instead, this is the starting point for much needed if challenging discussion that can lead us to a paradigm shift in national and international defence and security policy-making for a carbon-neutral world.

We need a *transformed and transformative doctrine* fit for purpose in this century of climate breakdown and pandemic – one based on revisiting and updating earlier work on the concept of *non-offensive defence* and prioritising *sustainable human safety* through social, economic and environmental justice with *Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence* at its heart.

## CARBON NEUTRAL PEACE AND DEFENCE CAN HELP TRANSFORM DEFENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SAFETY

*A concept such as Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence can help nations – and citizens – to fully see, and assess the carbon burden of their respective militaries in the round and therefore, devise the ways in which they must, like every other aspect of human activity, fully decarbonise.*

**It would enable visibility and action on:**

- the impact of the global military on climate change, inadequate emissions reporting in National Inventories and no carbon-reduction plan for militaries and defence industries in current NDCs;
- the attendant vicious circle that the role of the military on climate change imposes on the world's poorest: the impact of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction on climate change added to the impact of conflict and violence on people and environment;
- the impact of runaway military spending on *all* economies – developed world and developing world; and the undermining of many of the SDGs.

It would also enable/collate

- new thinking/frameworks to enhance – *and better still finance* – international human safety and security. Ideas such as Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence and the Transform Defence approach to re-apportioning of defence spending such that climate mitigation/adaptation; peacekeeping and conflict prevention; and pandemic preparedness are included as items inside national ‘defence’ spending.

*We must upend the risk pyramid, redefine defence and repurpose military spending. Climate change and global health, inequality/poverty reduction and conflict prevention are hard defence and security issues. No more ‘Cinderella’ status for these threats to our collective human safety.*

*On 24 May 2018, Secretary-General António Guterres released his Agenda for Disarmament, entitled Securing Our Common Future. In the Agenda, he observes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took an important step towards articulating how arms control, peace and security contribute to development. **Beyond addressing illicit arms flows, there remains a vast potential to operationally link the implementation of disarmament objectives with many other Sustainable Development Goals, in order to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness.** [our emphasis]*

*‘United Nations efforts to reduce military expenditures. A historical overview’, Michael Spies<sup>1</sup>*

## WHY IS CARBON NEUTRAL PEACE AND DEFENCE WORTHY OF A UNFCCC TOPIC?

Currently, there are 13 UNFCCC Topics: Action on Climate and SDGs, Adaptation and Resilience, Capacity-building, Climate Finance, Climate Technology, Education & Youth, Gender, Land Use, Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform, Mitigation, Pre-2020 Ambition and Implementation, Science, Market and Non-Market Mechanisms.

*Inexplicably, militaries and defence industries are not a part of any of them.*

Militaries and defence industries are directly implicated in many of them, particularly ‘Action on Climate and SDGs,’ ‘Adaptation and Resilience,’ ‘Capacity-building’ and ‘Mitigation.’ We cannot fully tackle climate emergency and SDGs without properly addressing the role and impact of militaries on climate and SDGs.

## REPORTING

Military emissions are voluntarily reported and included in some countries’ national inventories as part of generic headings, a handful of items mentioning military related activities and these items are not even specific for military but simply including military. We have the problem of a gaping data hole (and hence by extension a serious knowledge gap) concerning the global military carbon footprint and associated environmental and societal impacts. And there is a bigger picture impact of the specific role of the global military that is only partially visible – the military/defence sector has been excluded from any IPCC assessment so far, and as a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/occasionalpapers/unoda-occasional-papers-no-33-october-2019/>

consequence, there has been minimal public debate on the military/defence sector in our march towards a net-zero world.

**We need *Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence* as a suggested new UNFCCC Topic.** A net-zero climate-just world cannot be fully realised without Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence. We need our militaries to be fully on board for the carbon neutral future and be accounted for their past actions and damages. It is also of great urgency and importance that we have the corresponding transformation of our out-dated collective foreign, security and defence policies if we are to ensure long-term sustainable human safety.

## A UNFCCC TOPIC CARBON NEUTRAL PEACE AND DEFENCE

To include such a topic within the UNFCCC family of urgent headings would be to recognise the contribution of nations' militaries to climate change and environmental damage accrued as a result of as a result of day-to-day operations, resource extraction and weapon production and conflicts/wars, and that the human cost of all this falls disproportionately on the poorest, on women and on children.

**The UNFCCC topic *Carbon neutral peace and defence* inclusion would:**

- **bring** to the fore the need to drive military GHG emissions first to net-zero (currently voluntarily and no serious plan and actions) and then to negative<sup>2</sup>
  - The carbon footprint of the global militaries and associated defence industries is 445 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (2017); this is larger than the annual greenhouse gas emission of the entire country of Italy, and not much smaller than the total GHG emissions by UK (505 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) and France (482 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) respectively.
  - The global militaries and defence industries account for at least 1% of the total global greenhouse gas emissions, and the figure could be as high as 5%. For comparison, civil aviation accounts for approximately 2.1 % of global GHG emissions, and international aviation alone is responsible for around 1.3% of global GHG emissions.
  - If we rank the world's militaries together as a single country, they would be the 29th biggest oil consumer in the world, just ahead of Belgium or South Africa. To put it another way, this is half the oil consumption of the world's 5th biggest economy, the UK or the 6th biggest, France.

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<sup>2</sup> Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton, '*Indefensible: The true cost of the global military to our climate and human security*,' Transform Defence, 2020, <https://transformdefence.org/publication/indefensible/>. Neta C. Crawford, "*Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War*," Costs of War Project, 2019, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/ClimateChangeandCostofWar>. Oliver Belcher, Patrick Bigger, Ben Neimark, and Cara Kennelly, "*Hidden Carbon Costs of the 'everywhere war': Logistics, Geopolitical Ecology, and the Carbon Boot-print of the US Military*," 2019, <https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tran.12319>. Various reports by Stuart Parkinson, Scientist for Global Responsibility, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/projects/climate-change-military-main-outputs>.

- The total carbon footprint of EU15's militaries and defence industries is 60 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent – that is the same amount of emission as Ireland and roughly 2% of the total greenhouse gas emissions by EU15 in 2017. In the EU, direct CO2 emissions from aviation account for about 3% of total emissions.
- **act** as a catalyst for accelerating inevitable debate on carbon neutral peace and international dialogue on how we bring about a transformation of foreign and defence policies fit for purpose in a post-carbon, climate changed 21<sup>st</sup> century, allowing space for solutions-based new ideas on how to achieve Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence
- **reflect** the primary UN concern from its inception: the hope to secure peace between nations and the close connection between 'disarmament and development'.

## UN MOMENTUM

### Informal Group of Experts of the Security Council

*Climate change is the defining issue of our time and a multidimensional challenge. Its security dimension remains to be addressed comprehensively and systematically by the United Nations and particularly by the Security Council, for the Council to live up to its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security...*

*Millions of people around the world today already experience the effects of climate change which exacerbates, prolongs or contributes to the risk of future conflicts and instability and constitutes a key risk to international peace and security...*

*The ten members of the Security Council also announced that they will convene an Informal Group of Experts of the Security Council in order to assist the Council to achieve a more comprehensive and systematic approach on climate-related security risks in situations on its Agenda.*

***Joint statement by 10 members of the United Nations Security Council (Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Tunisia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the United Kingdom, Viet Nam) and 3 incoming members of the United Nations Security Council (Ireland, Kenya, Norway) on the Open Debate of the Security Council on Climate and Security, July 24, 2020<sup>3</sup>***

### Group of 51 Friends of Climate and Security

*We encourage the Security Council to continue mandating peacekeeping operations as well as Special Political Missions to consider climate-related risks in their activities. We sometimes hear that peacekeeping missions have more pressing issues to focus on than climate change. While this may seem true at a first glance, in many ways the effects of climate change make it harder to keep the peace. It is hardly a coincidence that eight out of the ten countries hosting the largest multilateral peace operations are located in areas highly exposed to the impact of climate change.*

***Item 2 from the plan of action included in a Statement by the 51 members of the Group of Friends of Climate and Security, presented at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Climate and Security, 24 July, 2020<sup>4</sup>***

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<sup>3</sup> <https://new-york-un.diplo.de/un-en/news-corner/200724-climate/2368770>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.swedenabroad.se/de/botschaften/un-new-york/current/news/statement/>

## CONCLUSION

The plan to address the climate emergency must address all factors. To be addressing all these issues without attention to \$2 trillion pa/ on global military spending; contribution of the global military to climate change; interrogating the \$2tr 'value for money' case in light of the enormity of the threats of climate chaos and pandemic to actual human safety; and the impossible task of poorly funded peacekeeping up against the deadly combination of conflict and climate is to be talking around a very big elephant in the room.

Meanwhile, no institution knows better than the UN that the human family is well into the reality of our 21<sup>st</sup> century man-made threats – climate chaos, a sixth mass extinction and global pandemic. Yet we are 'armed' with an out-of-date 20<sup>th</sup> century defence and security paradigm, based on a 20<sup>th</sup> century model of extractive and exploitative capitalism.

It's not working.

We need a practical, imaginative, brave discussion about redefining and re-making foreign and defence policy such that it is truly fit-for-purpose as well as understanding its role in climate change, pandemic, economic, racial and gender injustice is part of the system change process which is underway.

**The inclusion of a UNFCCC Topic on Carbon Neutral Peace and Defence would help illuminate the way.**

*"What we urgently need now is a rethinking of the entire concept of security. Even after the end of the Cold War, it has been envisioned mostly in military terms. Over the past few years, all we've been hearing is talk about weapons, missiles and airstrikes... The overriding goal must be human security: providing food, water and a clean environment and caring for people's health. To achieve it, we need to develop strategies, make preparations, plan and create reserves. But all efforts will fail if governments continue to waste money by fueling the arms race... I'll never tire of repeating: we need to demilitarize world affairs, international politics and political thinking."*

*Former President of the Soviet Union,  
Mikhail Gorbachev, April 15, 2020<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://time.com/5820669/mikhail-gorbachev-coronavirus-human-security/>