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# Disarmament and development

## Article 36

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### Background

Over the past four decades, the links between disarmament and issues of development or global inequality have been the subject of General Assembly resolutions, UN reports, and occasionally more intensive consideration by states. This agenda originated in concern at the impact of the global arms race on social and economic development during the Cold War.

The International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in 1987 adopted an action plan that included commitments to allocate resources released by disarmament to development and consider reducing military expenditure.<sup>1</sup> This followed an in-depth study by the UN in 1982 that set out the negative impacts of a large military sector on long-term economic growth and the structural changes required for economic development.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, a reappraisal of the relationship between disarmament and development by a Group of Governmental Experts was released in 2004.<sup>3</sup> Reaffirming the core concerns and evidence regarding military expenditure and economic development, the report also elaborated on other threats to safety, stability, and development objectives that can result from

the trade and use of certain weapons (such as landmines and small arms).

Every year, a resolution is introduced to the First Committee on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the relationship between disarmament and development, requiring the UN Secretary-General to report on this issue.

### Current context

Recent research on participation data of meetings between 2010 and 2014 of thirteen forums addressing disarmament and weapons issues shows the serious underrepresentation of developing countries in discussions. Lower-income countries are less likely to attend, speak at, or hold formal roles in multilateral meetings on disarmament and weapons issues. Where they do attend, they field smaller delegations than richer countries. These countries are also less likely to be members of treaties or forums on weapons and disarmament, or to meet their reporting obligations under these instruments.<sup>4</sup>

Disarmament and weapons issues are of global concern – with developing countries also often more negatively affected by the use and trade of weapons, and less likely to be major arms producers. A diverse range of interests must be fully represented at international forums

for any attempt to construct an equitable international legal order that reflects the concerns of populations worldwide. Research also suggests that diverse multilateral forums are more productive.<sup>5</sup> Developing countries and their civil society are currently relatively marginalised from agenda setting and decision-making in disarmament through their structural underrepresentation. This must be addressed.

At First Committee in 2015, thirty-nine states made statements linking disarmament and development, on: the opportunity costs (particularly for developing countries) of global military spending; how the trade and use of certain weapons creates barriers to or directly undermines economic and social development; and the ways in which certain disarmament processes (such as on biological and chemical weapons) can directly support economic and technical development activities.<sup>6</sup>

Sixteen of the fifty-seven resolutions adopted at the First Committee in 2015 reflected one or more of these themes. A resolution on

disarmament and development was adopted, with explanations of vote from the US noting that it considers disarmament and development two separate issues, and the UK and France questioning the negative relationship between development and military spending.

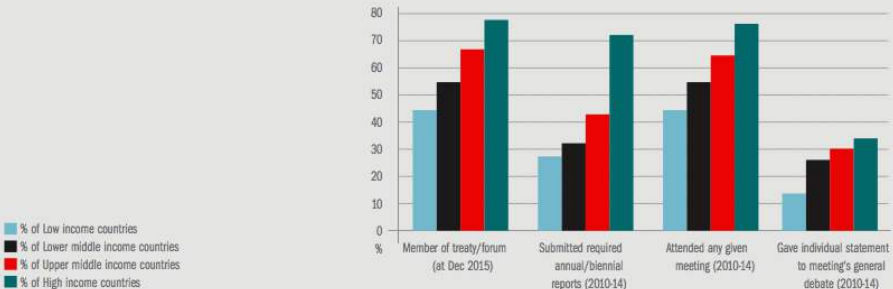
Several states made reference to how disarmament initiatives could support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs themselves contain almost no reference to disarmament and weapons issues – though a wider goal on violence and conflict was, significantly, achieved. Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies includes a target for the significant reduction by 2030 of “illicit financial and arms flows”.<sup>7</sup>

## Recommendations

*During the First Committee, delegations should:*

- Recognise the contribution that disarmament, the restriction of certain weapons, and reduction of military spending can make to development, or to removing barriers to development; and

**Participation of countries in  
13 disarmament/weapons forums:  
averages within income groups for  
all processes and meetings**



- In recognition of this, as well as of the greater negative impact of armed violence on developing countries, recognise the need to address the issue of the underrepresentation of lower-income countries and certain regions in multilateral disarmament forums, and suggest practical measures. The integration of gender and humanitarian perspectives, and ensuring gender diversity and the meaningful participation of those who have been most affected by the issues under consideration, should also be recognised as crucial.
  - Support and resource programmes of sponsorship, training, capacity building, and preparation, and promote the consideration of other practical measures in the organisation of forums that could maximise participation (e.g. regarding length of meetings, location etc.);
  - Contribute to the wider framing of disarmament and weapons issues to address a broader range of concerns, for example through making links with humanitarian and development agendas, in order to facilitate broader inclusion; and
  - Raise the visibility of marginalisation by supporting the consistent collection, monitoring, and analysis of participation data, to improve awareness and measure progress.
- Beyond First Committee, states should:*
- Reduce military budgets and redirect funds to social and economic development within their countries and through development aid;

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- 1 *Report of the international conference on the relationship between disarmament and development*, A/CONF.130/39, 1987.
  - 2 *Report of the Secretary General: The Relationship between Disarmament and Development*, A/35/356, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, United Nations Centre for Disarmament, 1982.
  - 3 *The relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context*, A/59/119, UN General Assembly, 2004.
  - 4 Elizabeth Minor, *Disarmament, Development and Patterns of Marginalisation in International Forums*, Article 36, 2016, <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/A36-Disarm-Dev-Marginalisation.pdf>.
  - 5 John Borrie and Ashley Thornton, "The Value of Diversity in Multilateral Disarmament Work," United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), 2008, <http://unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/the-value-of-diversity-in-multilateral-disarmament-work-344.pdf>.
  - 6 "Discussion on disarmament and development at UN General Assembly First Committee," Article 36, November 2015, <http://www.article36.org/updates/d-d-1st-com>.
  - 7 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, UN General Assembly, 2015.