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"The reduction of the military budget and disarmament are necessary conditions of security and development" (Anatole Rapaport, presentation at the World Order Conference, 2001)

Throughout the years, through international agreements, member states of the United Nations have recognized that the military budget has been a waste and misuse of resources. Unfortunately, institutional memory is either short or member states ignore precedents.

In 1976 at Habitat 1, member states of the United Nations affirmed the following in relation to the military budget:

"The waste and misuse of resources in war and armaments should be prevented. All countries should make a firm commitment to promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, in particular in the field of nuclear disarmament. Part of the resources thus released should be utilized so as to achieve a better quality of life for humanity and particularly the peoples of developing countries" (II, 12 Habitat 1).

In 1981, in the General Assembly resolution entitled Resolution on the reduction of the military budget, the member states:

(i) reaffirmed "the urgent need to reduce the military budget, and agreed to freeze and reduce the military budget";

(ii) recognised that "the military budget constitutes a heavy burden for the economies of all

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nations, and has extremely harmful consequences on international peace and security";

(iii) reiterated the appeal "to all States, in particular the most heavily armed States, pending the conclusion of agreements on the reduction of military expenditures, to exercise self-restraint in their military expenditures with a view to reallocating the funds thus saved to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries" (Resolution on the Reduction of Military budgets, 1981).

These appeals were further reinforced in a 1983 General Assembly Resolution on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, that curbing the arms build-up would make it possible to release additional resources for use in economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries." Also in the 1993 resolution, member states considered that "the magnitude of military expenditures is now such that their various implications can no longer be ignored in the efforts pursued in the international community to secure the recovery of the world economy and the establishment of a new international economic order."

Also in 1992, all member states recognized that "Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development" ( Rio Declarations. Principle 24, UNCED, 1992), and in Chapter 33, of Agenda 21, member states of the United Nations made a commitment to the "the reallocation of resources presently committed to military purposes" (33.18e)

In 1994, in adopting the statement from the International Conference on Population and Development, the member states of the United Nations concurred that the attainment of "quantitative and qualitative goals of the present Programme of Action clearly require additional resources, some of which could become available from a reordering of priorities at the individual, national and international levels. However, none of the actions required—nor all of them combined— is expensive in the context of either current global development or military expenditures." (Article 1.19)

In 1995, similarly, states in adopting the statement from the Social Development Summit endorsed the calling for "the reallocation of military spending to ensure a greater pocket of resources to expand public services. Again, in 1995, member states of the United Nations reconfirmed these commitments by adopting the Platform of Action at the UN conference on Women, Equality, Development and Peace. In the Platform of Action, States have made a commitment to maintain "peace and security at the global, regional and local levels, together with the prevention of policies of aggression ... and the resolution of armed conflict" (Art. 14) and to reduce "...military expenditures" (Art. 15), states have also made a commitment to the "prevention and resolution of conflicts" (Art.15) and to "increase and hasten, ... the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes" (145a).

In the Habitat II Agenda, what was originally proposed as Article 140 m: "use a reduction of national military budgets to fund local programs for human settlements" was left out in the final Habitat II Agenda in the sections related to Domestic financial resources and economic instruments.

In the 1984 General Assembly Resolution entitled the Right of Peoples to Peace, there were

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"Appeals to all States and international organizations to do their utmost to assist in implementing the right of peoples to peace through the adoption of ...measures at both the national and the international level." (4. Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace approved by General Assembly resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984)

It is time for the member states of the United Nations to give substance to the Habitat II Agenda, by recapturing the commitment from Habitat 1, in 1976, to substantially reduce the military budget.

Currently the Global Community spends more than 1.75 trillion, annually (See Chart below) on the military budget at a time when many basic and fundamental rights have not been fulfilled: the right to affordable and safe housing; the right to unadulterated food (pesticide-free and genetically engineered-free food); the right to safe drinking water; the right to a safe environment; the right to universally accessible, not for profit health care; and the right to free and accessible education.