



# Summary Transcript

## WEBINAR

### **Real Costs of the Push to Rearm in Europe and Beyond: *Implications for Arms Control, Business and Human Rights, and International Law***

**8th October 2025, 14h00-15h30 CET**

#### **A. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The event was co-moderated by **Dr. Yvette Issar**, Consultant, *Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)* and **Dr. Lana Baydas**, Program Director, *American Bar Association Center for Human Rights (ABA CHR)*.

Dr. Issar welcomed attendees on behalf of the **co-organizing institutions**:

- *Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)*
- *American Bar Association Center for Human Rights (ABA CHR) and*
- *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).*

She noted the event was taking place at “a moment of profound change and instability”, marked by heightened geopolitical tensions and violent conflicts affecting millions worldwide.

Citing the **UN Secretary-General's 2025 report**, [\*The Security We Need\*](#), she highlighted alarming trends in **global military expenditure**, which has risen for ten consecutive years, reaching **USD 2.7 trillion in 2024** — an amount equivalent to **750 times the UN's regular budget**. According to projections, global military spending could reach **USD 4.7–6.6 trillion by 2035**.

Dr. Issar emphasized that these increases “are not yielding greater peace but are instead undermining our shared vision for a sustainable future.” She further echoed the report's warning that current spending levels contradict the spirit of **Article 26 of the UN Charter**, which calls for maintaining international peace and security with “the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.”

She posed guiding questions aimed at encouraging critical reflection on whether the prevailing **security paradigm** is delivering genuine safety:

- Have escalating defense budgets made the world safer?



- What are the social, economic, human rights, and democratic trade-offs of rearmament?
- Do citizens truly support such spending, or would they prefer to see those resources directed toward **development, health, education, gender equality, and human rights**?

## **B. Introduction of Panelists**

Dr. Baydas noted that the panel brought together experts from disarmament, economics, law, human rights, and climate policy to explore what the current security paradigm costs — in **financial, social, and human terms** — and to consider what a more **human-centred approach to security** might require in practice.

She introduced the distinguished speakers in the order that they would deliver their remarks.

- **Dr. Nan Tian**, Programme Director, Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*
- **Dr. León Castellanos-Jankiewicz**, Senior Researcher and Principal Investigator, Rearming Europe with Legal Accountability (RELY) Project, *Asser Institute*
- **Prof. Cecilia Bailliet**, UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity; Professor at the Faculty of Law of the *University of Oslo, Norway*
- **Ms. Ruth Rohde**, Researcher and Project Coordinator, *Shadow World Investigations*
- **Ms. Deborah Burton**, Co-founder, *Tipping Point North South*

## **C. Panelist Remarks**

### **1. Dr. Nan Tian, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**

- *Highlighting trends in global and European military expenditure*
- *Opening reflections on security “narrowly” construed vs. “human-centred” security*

Dr. Nan Tian opened the discussion by setting the empirical context for today’s global security environment, which he described as “**exceptionally difficult**,” marked by unprecedented levels of geopolitical competition, territorial disputes, and deadly, protracted conflicts. He noted that the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists’ Doomsday Clock* was set at **89 seconds to midnight in 2025**, the closest ever, underscoring how rapidly the global security situation has deteriorated.

Dr. Tian reported that **global military spending reached USD 2.7 trillion in 2024**, the highest level ever recorded and equivalent to the **GDP of the entire African continent**. To illustrate the scale, he remarked that if that amount were converted into 100-dollar bills laid end-to-end, they would stretch from Earth to the moon and back five and a half times. We have had **ten consecutive years of increases in military spending**, with approximately **two-thirds of all countries** raising their defense budgets. All five global regions and the world’s **15 largest spenders – accounting for 80 percent of total global expenditure** – increased their spending last year. This highlights that countries **conceptualize security narrowly**, viewing it primarily from the lens of military strength and deterrence.



In **Europe**, defense budgets now exceed levels seen at the end of the Cold War, driven largely by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. With NATO's commitment to spend **up to 5 percent of GDP on defense by 2035**, and the United States announcing a defense budget surpassing USD 1 trillion by 2026, the global total could reach **USD 4–6 trillion by 2035**. Similar upward trajectories are expected in China, India, and other major powers undergoing military modernization.

The **composition of military budgets** is also changing, with increasing allocations to procurement, operations, maintenance, and R&D (research and development), suggesting a surge in investment for arms production and emerging weapons systems.

The **UN Secretary-General's 2025 report**, [\*The Security We Need\*](#) depicts an **ever-widening gap** - one that evokes the image of open scissor blades - between rising military budgets and stagnant or declining development financing. This divergence threatens progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Instead of fostering greater security, escalating military spending may **deepen insecurity** by crowding out investment in social, economic, and environmental fields. There are significant **opportunity costs** of excessive military spending — reduced GDP growth, constrained social investment, worsening inequality, and environmental harm from military activities. Escalating military spending may also contribute to a **security paradox**, where increasing military spending in the absence of confidence building, risk reduction, information sharing and diplomacy undermines rather than facilitates greater security. Dr. Tian stressed that “**military solutions do not address the underlying causes of insecurity**,” and that genuine security depends on factors such as governance, social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic stability.

Dr. Tian reflected on a **multi-dimensional and human-centred approach to security**, noting that the state's primary duty is to protect its people — their **income, health, education, environmental safety, and dignity** — not merely its borders. He called for a **balanced allocation of public resources**, supported by transparency, accountability, and democratic oversight, to ensure that military expenditure does not crowd out investments in human development.

He concluded by urging policymakers to remember their commitments under the 2030 Agenda and to “**rebalance the ship**” by integrating human-centred security considerations into national and international budget priorities.

## 2. Dr. León Castellanos-Jankiewicz – Asser Institute

- *Rearming Europe: Legal and Regulatory Challenges/Opportunities*
- *Extraterritorial dimensions of the European rearmament project*

Dr. León Castellanos-Jankiewicz provided an overview of the **European Union's large-scale rearmament initiative**, analysing its legal, regulatory, and human-rights implications. He described the EU as entering “**uncharted territory**,” fiscally, politically and legally, as it seeks to dramatically expand its military industrial base in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



The EU Commission's "[ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030](#)" programme has earmarked **€800 billion** for rearmament between now and 2029, with **€150 billion** already released for immediate spending. The initiative focuses primarily on **procurement and production of arms**, rather than their transfer or export, aiming to rebuild and restock depleted capabilities. The impetus for rearmament was born of the crisis resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, there is a risk of turning **crisis-driven policies into permanent legal frameworks**. Dr. Castellanos-Jankiewicz warned of "the risk of employing a crisis rationale to create more permanent, legal frameworks and long-term rearmament policies."

He identified **key regulatory risks**, including potential **deregulation of the EU defence market** and the **loosening of safeguards such as risk assessments** designed to ensure accountability and human-rights protection. The draft **European Defence Industry Programme (March 2024)**, he noted, includes proposals that could allow exemptions from environmental, labour, and human-rights protections, and make **end-user certificates and re-export controls optional**—changes that could significantly **erode transparency and accountability** in the sector. "If we start giving companies leeway to roll back protections," he cautioned, "we will be in a worse place in the future, even if the immediate goal—higher production—is achieved."

Despite these concerns, Dr. Castellanos-Jankiewicz also pointed to **opportunities for proactive regulation and prevention**. He advocated embedding **human-rights safeguards and risk assessments at the design and contractual stages of weapons production**, rather than waiting to address harm after it occurs. He described this as "**baking safeguards into weapons production and procurement**," a preventive approach that could reduce downstream violations.

Other positive avenues include improving **supply-chain traceability and data sharing**, which could help **de-risk diversion and trafficking**, and incorporating **human-rights clauses directly into defence contracts**, setting clearer expectations for companies before manufacturing begins.

On the **extraterritorial implications** of EU rearmament, Dr. Castellanos-Jankiewicz observed that the arms industry operates on a massive scale. As such, scaling up production to achieve economic efficiency will likely create **pressure to export beyond Europe**, raising significant concerns about **diversion and misuse**. He pointed to past instances of European-origin weapons being found in conflicts in **Yemen, Myanmar**, and even **Ukraine**, underscoring the global ripple effects of regional policy decisions.

He concluded that the **ReArm Europe** initiative should be used as an opportunity to **strengthen safeguards, transparency, and accountability** rather than weaken them. Embedding legal obligations at every stage of the procurement process could ensure that Europe's rearmament does not undermine the very principles—human rights, rule of law, and solidarity—that it seeks to defend.

### 3. Prof. Cecilia Bailliet – UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity / Professor at University of Oslo



- *Reclaiming and retaining a human-rights-based solidarity orientation*
- *Promoting resilient civil societies and the values of peace and nonviolence*

Prof. Cecilia Bailliet reflected on the implications of rising militarization for democracy, civic life, and the rule of law, urging a return to a **human-rights-based solidarity** as the foundation of security. She began by questioning the logic of setting **GDP targets for defence spending**, arguing that such measures are “**counterproductive**” and fail to address the real threats facing societies today.

According to Prof. Bailliet, the most significant threats to democracies are not conventional/military in nature, but rather stem from **artificial intelligence and cyber-driven misinformation, disinformation, and cognitive warfare**. These fuel polarization and violence within our societies, and “cannot be countered with military hardware.” The combination of **over-securitization** and **unequal wealth distribution** has fostered “a widespread culture of fear, passivity and hopelessness,” leading to civic disengagement—especially among young people. In some countries, those who engage in human rights, environmental, peace or disarmament advocacy face surveillance, harassment, or even arrest.

Prof. Bailliet called for renewed investment in **resilient civil societies** where people feel safe to participate in debates on human rights, peace, and environmental protection. She urged states to **promote a culture of peace through education**, encouraging values such as non-violence, empathy, tolerance, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and gender equality. “This is urgently needed,” she emphasized, “in response to the escalation of political violence and division.”

She noted that policy-makers are increasingly resorting to conflict-management to lower escalation, rather than working to restore genuine and lasting peace. Turning to international law, she drew attention to the neglect of **Article 33 of the UN Charter**, which clearly obliges states to pursue **peaceful dispute resolution** before resorting to force. “It is extraordinary,” she remarked, “how such clear language could be so systematically and persistently ignored by States.” The consequence is that **conflict has been normalized**, while **diplomacy and peacebuilding** are defunded and **defence procurement** rises unchecked.

Prof. Bailliet warned that this shift has led many societies - once celebrated for strong distributive systems that addressed the needs of citizenry as concerns healthcare, education and labour guarantees - to adopt **austerity narratives** centered around eliminating supposed “waste” and “re-incarnating Sparta as a relevant institutional model.” She described this as an “**opaque overhaul of the institutional markers of national identity being rapidly conducted without sufficient civic debate**.” The result is the **diminishment of solidarity programs** that support women, children, minorities, migrants, and the elderly, **deepening insecurity**.

Her conclusion was stark: “**Unchecked militarization weakens social cohesion**,” even as many bemoan the regression of democracy around the world. She urged a **re-balancing of priorities**, strengthening transparency and civil-society participation in oversight of defence policy and corporate conduct.



In closing, Prof. Bailliet highlighted her forthcoming **report to the UN Human Rights Council on Peace and International Solidarity**, inviting contributions from states and civil-society organizations. She also encouraged participants to engage in the “**World Solidarity Map**” initiative, which documents grassroots peace and human-rights actions worldwide, as a means to restore confidence, cooperation, and collective agency. She advocated for **increased transparency, clear procedures and space** for civil society to raise solidarity demands, particularly focused on due diligence of States and private sector actors involved in the arms trade.

#### 4. Ms. Ruth Rohde – Shadow World Investigations

- *Rearmament's trade-offs: security, development and social costs*
- *Rising militarization, corruption and state capture/democratic erosion*

Ms. Ruth Rohde examined the **direct and indirect costs of rising military expenditure**, emphasizing that the growing diversion of public resources toward defence is generating deep economic, environmental, and political consequences.

She questioned whether the **primary threats to European security are military** in nature, noting that **climate change and environmental degradation** are often overlooked threats to collective security. Despite this, the military sector remains largely exempt from climate reporting, allowing governments to obscure its carbon footprint. Meanwhile, the arms industry has lobbied for classification as a “**sustainable investment**” under EU financial regulations, which would make it harder for investors and ordinary citizens to divest from arms.

Ms. Rohde also described the expansion of Europe’s “**border-industrial complex**”, which overlaps heavily with the defence sector. She reminded us of *Alan Kurdi*, a Syrian child who drowned in an attempt by his family to flee conflict and reach safety in Europe in 2015. She further reminded participants that over **33,000 people have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean** since 2014. The **EU’s externalization of border control** — including payments to authoritarian governments to stop migration — represents “Fortress Europe becoming a death trap for tens of thousands.”

Increasing military production in Europe will likely lead to **overproduction and increased exports**, creating risks of **weapons proliferation and diversion**. This threatens European security in the medium-to-long term. Additionally, European countries are currently **weakening arms-export controls**, and previous experience shows that European-made weapons often end up fueling conflicts in **Sudan, Gaza, Myanmar**, and elsewhere. “**This is not an avoidable side effect of rearmament,**” she argued. “**It is a feature of the system.**”

Beyond these security dimensions, Ms. Rohde highlighted the **economic and democratic trade-offs** of militarization. European economies are being **restructured around defence spending**. “The arms industry is becoming the only area of public investment,” she noted — meaning **austerity for health, pensions, and the green transition**, but “endless money for arms makers.” She underscored that investment in the arms sector produces **far fewer**



**jobs** than investments in health or education, while **locking economies into long-term dependency on conflict-driven demand**. Some of the public spending being redirected to the military comes at the expense of **development and aid budgets**, which have seen dramatic cuts in the US and Europe. Such cuts harm the world's **most vulnerable people**, and **deepen the root causes of insecurity**.

She warned that this transformation coincides with the **rise of far-right movements** across Europe, whose authoritarian and patriarchal ideologies align disturbingly with militarized values and expanding surveillance. "We are arming governments that could soon be led by the far right," she cautioned, referencing trends in Germany and the UK.

The rush to rearm may lead to **deregulation** that may negatively impact essential safeguards on human rights, health and climate. In an attempt to be "reliable partners in weapons-making" countries may adopt **lowest common denominator thresholds** of regulation when it comes to arms exports.

The arms trade is also "**one of the most corrupt businesses in the world**." Ms. Rohde explored how militarization **erodes transparency and fuels corruption**. For example, European giant **Airbus recently paid a USD 3.9 billion fine** for corruption, but it is not clear how this affected its operations and its access to tenders. There are also troubling links between arms corporations and political financing — such as 2000 EUR campaign contributions by **Rheinmetall subsidiaries** to German legislators on parliamentary budget and defence committees. "**Is our democracy really this cheap?**" she asked pointedly.

Ms. Rhode described how growing secrecy at the EU level and **corporate influence over policymaking** risk turning the arms industry into a system of "**state capture**" — where entire political systems are structured to benefit private interests, disable oversight, and entrench inequality. Corporations such as **Palantir**, she added, are now deeply embedded in Europe's surveillance and data systems, raising profound questions about accountability.

Ms. Rohde concluded that the European arms industry is already **making societies less secure** — undermining democracy, deepening inequality, and normalizing repression of dissent. The push to rearm, unless accompanied by **much more robust human rights safeguards, transparency, accountability and a free and independent civil society**, will only exacerbate this situation. "Austerity for everything else, but endless resources for rearmament," she warned, "is not sustainable — economically, socially, or morally." To counter this, Ms. Rhode called for renewed public investment in **peace research**.

## 5. Ms. Deborah Burton – Co-Founder, Tipping Point North South

- *Militarization, the climate crisis, and ecological breakdown*
- *The military–fossil fuel nexus*

Ms. Deborah Burton addressed the **interconnections between rising military expenditure, climate change, and ecological breakdown**, underscoring that militarization is not only diverting vital resources from climate action but is also a major direct driver of global emissions.



She began by recalling the **UN Secretary-General's 2025 report on military expenditure**, which warns that militarization is “**crowding out social investment**” and undermining progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). “There is a direct correlation between military spending and military emissions,” she explained. “The more you spend on fossil-fuel-reliant warships, jets, tanks, bombs, and missiles, the more you emit—and the more you deprive the poorest and most climate-vulnerable of the resources they need.”

Ms. Burton noted that **militaries are responsible for approximately 5.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions**—a carbon footprint larger than that of **civil aviation and shipping combined**, or greater than the emissions of all **54 nations of Africa**. If counted as a single entity, the global military sector would rank **fourth in the world for total emissions**, comparable to Russia. Yet these figures likely **underestimate** the true impact, as they exclude emissions from **wars, supply chains, and post-conflict reconstruction**.

During the negotiations of the **Kyoto Protocol**, the United States objected to mandatory reporting of military emissions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), citing national security. While military fuel use reporting is nominally required, **most national inventories omit key military emissions** such as those from international operations, military aviation and maritime transport, supply chains, and weapons manufacturing. This results in a **vast data gap that obscures the military's true carbon footprint**.

Ms. Burton cited [recent research by Scientists for Global Responsibility \(SGR\)](#) showing that for every **USD 100 billion increase in military spending**, the military carbon footprint rises by **32 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent**. Under NATO's new **3.5 percent of GDP** spending target, emissions could rise by an additional **1, 320 million tons** over the next decade. “All of this **does not bring greater security**,” she warned, “but instead **drives conflict and is catastrophic for the climate and for humanity's ability to adapt to climate chaos**.”

Turning to **climate finance**, Ms. Burton described a stark **resource imbalance** between defence and climate priorities. While the SDGs require **USD 2.4 trillion annually** and climate adaptation advocates call for **USD 5 trillion per year**, actual commitments remain around **USD 1.3 trillion**, with only **USD 300 billion** from public sources. By contrast, NATO states already spend **52 times more on the military than on climate finance**.

The comparison, she said, is morally and politically untenable: “Runaway military spending is robbing Peter to pay Paul.” The **USD 2 trillion** invested in the F-35 fighter jet program alone could, for example, fund **UN Peacekeeping operations for the next 440 years**, **UN disaster risk reduction for 4,000 years**, or sustain **World Health Organization (WHO) budgets for a millennium**.

Ms. Burton called for **comprehensive reporting of military emissions**, inclusion of military activities within **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** under the Paris Agreement, and full disclosure of **Scope 3 (supply-chain) emissions**, which are estimated to be **five times larger** than direct operational emissions. “No other military has ever reported full supply-chain emissions—except Norway,” she noted.



She urged the **redirection of a portion of public military spending toward climate finance**, alongside fossil-fuel subsidy reform, polluter taxes, and debt cancellation. “Cuts to military spending,” she emphasized, “are also a win for the climate, because they mean significant cuts to emissions.”

Ms. Burton also elaborated on the **deep structural ties between the defence and fossil-fuel industries**, which she described as forming a single “**military–fossil fuel complex**.” Modern militaries depend entirely on fossil fuels for peacetime operations, overseas bases, and combat missions. “**There is no military without fossil fuel—it is the lifeblood of the modern military**,” she said.

The production of weapons systems also relies heavily on **carbon-intensive materials such as steel and aluminium**, compounding the environmental footprint. Many wars, she noted, have been directly linked to **the protection or securing of fossil-fuel supplies**, creating a feedback loop between conflict and carbon dependency.

Finally, Ms. Burton observed that these issues are now gaining traction within **UNFCCC and civil-society spaces**, propelled by the devastating wars in **Ukraine** and **Gaza**. The growing awareness of the military’s climate impact, she suggested, must be leveraged to demand a “**sea change in redefining defence**”. We need a conception of defence that is “**fit for the 21st century and places threats from the climate emergency, pandemics, and inequality as core security priorities** alongside traditional defence concerns.”

“The Secretary-General’s report describes exactly what we need,” she concluded: “to **rebalance military spending for a sustainable and peaceful future that prioritizes diplomacy, cooperation, and disarmament** over endless buildup.”

## **D. Q&A Highlights**

### **1) Human rights due diligence for arms producers**

**Question:** *To what extent should arms-producing companies be subject to human rights due diligence (e.g., UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights), especially for exports to high-risk contexts? What can international law/treaties do to enforce accountability for States and corporations?*

#### **Key points:**

- Due diligence is a corporate responsibility, not optional.
- The American Bar Association’s *Defense Industry Human Rights & Due Diligence* guidance (2022) was cited as a practical framework (end-use monitoring, supply-chain checks, grievance and remediation pathways).
- The justifications often cited by private sector actors in the arms industry that “due diligence is performed by the regulator” or that “defense is an ‘exceptional’ sector exempt from the UN Guiding Principles” was rejected.



- Beyond accountability through the courts, effective non-judicial leverage can be pursued, e.g., investor pressure and divestment (e.g., pension funds), reputational campaigns, and sectoral standards to shape corporate behavior.
- Legal avenues remain relevant where feasible (assuming domestic courts willing to hear cases, avoiding “political question” bars). But hybrid strategies—litigation + public campaigns—often move faster.

## 2) EU rearmament, export controls, and the risk of outward spillover

**Question:** *How are the European Defence Industry Program (EDIP) and the ReArm Europe Programme affected by the recent revision of the EU Common Position and the forthcoming revision of the Transfer Directive [these are EU instruments regulating weapons transfers]? Do these imply that increasing arms exports from Europe is an intentional element of the EU policy?*

### Key points:

- EU frameworks permit arms transfers subject to safeguards. However, market pressures from scaled/increased production are likely to push exports outward, raising risks of diversion/misuse risks in third states, if robust mechanisms to prevent irresponsible transfers are not in place. This could fuel further conflict and violence.
- Policy risk: If crisis-era shortcuts become permanent (weaker end-user controls, optional re-export checks), accountability erodes and conflict risks externalize.

## 3) Could the EU become a major arms manufacturer?

**Question:** *Could the EU itself become a major arms producer in the years to come? Could any risks be mitigated through a legal/regulatory approach, such as that being advanced through the [Rearming Europe with Legal Accountability \(RELY\) project](#)?*

### Key points:

- Institution vs. members: The EU as a supranational institution is not manufacturing weapons; its member states are.
- The EU is creating rules and processes so that its members can better coordinate production. However, uneven national capacities and sovereignty over defense mean coordination is difficult.
- Certain EU member states are very significant arms manufacturers globally.
- However, in the field of artificial intelligence, which is one of the biggest purveyors of lethality right now, major companies are in the US and China.
- Mitigation via contracts: The RELY approach—embed human-rights clauses and due-diligence obligations at the contractual/design stage—can hard-wire safeguards earlier than the export phase.

## 4) Critical raw materials and militarization

**Question:** *Is the drive for critical minerals tied to military needs (mirroring “oil wars”)? Are major military powers preparing to secure access to raw materials all over the world?*



### Key points:

- Yes—material dependency is real. New research (e.g., [Global Justice Now report](#) focusing on the UK) shows several minerals are deemed “critical” primarily for military supply chains, creating a self-reinforcing cycle: classification → military demand → securitized access strategies.

## 5) Climate vs. conventional threats: evidence and framing

**Question:** *Sources to support that climate risk poses a bigger/more immediate challenge to Europe than Russia’s military threat?*

### Key points:

- Evidence base: Participants referenced European risk assessments (e.g., EEA climate risk reporting).
- Framing caution: Avoid securitizing climate policy; the aim is right-sizing threats and de-militarizing the climate response, while still taking military threat from Russia seriously. The point: climate risks are immediate and systemic.

## 6) Who’s missing from the debate—and how to engage them?

**Question:** *Which actors are missing or under-represented from the conversation about rising militarism, and how do we engage them?*

### Key points:

- Public engagement is pivotal. Move beyond “the choir” and mobilize broader constituencies to pressure parliaments on budget choices.
- Getting the public more involved in advocating for a human-centered approach to security.
- Peace dividends matter: Durable peace agreements historically lower military outlays regionally, freeing resources for development—a strategic advocacy narrative.

## 7) Campaign advice for influencing finance and pension funds

**Question:** *Practical tips to push financial services and pension funds to avoid complicity in abuses?*

### Key points:

- Policy lever: Keep arms out of ESG classifications; if defense is labeled “sustainable,” mass divestment becomes impossible for ordinary savers.



- Target existing policies: Use current exclusions (e.g., anti-corruption, WMD, IHL risk) to force divestment consistent with funds' own rules
- Conflict-focused advocacy: City councils and pension trustees respond to concrete links (e.g., Gaza) between investment and credible IHL risk.

### **E. Closing Reflections**

As the discussion drew to a close, panelists offered brief parting reflections, underscoring both the urgency and the possibilities for action.

- **Dr. Nan Tian** urged participants to take forward the momentum generated by the UN Secretary-General's *2025 Report on Military Spending* to **galvanize a wider debate** on how resources are allocated and how priorities can be rebalanced toward **sustainable development, peace, and human security**.
- **Dr. León Castellanos-Jankiewicz** emphasized the value of **constructive engagement across difference**. "We need to sit down with those we disagree with," he said, "because conflict and dialogue are both necessary to move beyond impasses."
- **Prof. Cecilia Bailliet** reminded participants that **peace must be actively built** through concrete engagement by civil society, states, and corporations. She called on states to **honour their Charter obligations** under Article 33 of the UN Charter by giving priority to peaceful dispute resolution: "Violence cannot become normalized as an acceptable policy tool." She called for renewed engagement in these matters for policy makers and the public alike, as the current direction will only lead to more violence.
- **Ms. Ruth Rohde** spoke to the importance of perseverance in difficult times. "It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the scale of militarization," she said, "but the work of civil society—often small and under-resourced—is vital. We just have to keep going."
- **Ms. Deborah Burton** echoed the value of dialogue, adding that the arms trade offers a **powerful entry point for engaging the public** on the moral and economic dimensions of militarization. "Public money is being funnelled into arms companies on an enormous scale," she said. "Exposing this dynamic can awaken public scrutiny and demand for change."

### **Moderator's Concluding Remarks**

The moderators emphasized the **interdisciplinary nature** of the challenge and the need to **work across sectors**—law, economics, climate, human rights, peacebuilding—to advance a **human-centred security** agenda grounded in transparency, accountability, and prevention.



Dr. Issar thanked co-moderator Lana Baydas and all speakers for an exceptionally rich and thoughtful discussion. She invited participants to explore *Figure 11, page 30* of the Secretary-General's report *The Security We Need*, which vividly illustrates the **imbalance between military and social spending**, and highlights the trade offs.

She reflected that the **questions raised during the event are urgent**: “We need to decide together how we want our public spending to be allocated. Rebalancing global priorities is not naïve idealism—it is a survival imperative.”

Acknowledging the legacy of peace-oriented organizations such as the Quakers, she noted that while calls to reduce military spending are sometimes dismissed as unrealistic, the stakes of inaction are existential. “Our civilization depends on getting this rebalancing right,” she said.

Ms. Issar expressed hope that the conversation would spark **further dialogue and collaboration**, extending beyond policy circles into **universities, classrooms, civil-society networks, and dinner-table conversations**—the “ripples of change” that can shift public imagination toward a **human-centred vision of security**.

She encouraged participants to remain connected with the organizers and share ideas for follow-up collaboration. The **recording and full transcript** will be made available, and attendees were invited to circulate them widely.

\*\*\* END OF EVENT\*\*\*

## **F. References mentioned during the event**

### **1. UN Secretary-General's 2025 Report on Military Spending**

- Full report: [The Security We Need – Overcoming the Global Security Paradox](#)
- Overview: [front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/Overview\\_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf](https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/Overview_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf)

2. [World Solidarity Map](#): A civil-society initiative to register global solidarity actions.
3. [Call for Input](#) by UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity (Report on Peace and International Solidarity, 2025)
4. [From War Lobby to War Economy](#) (European Network Against the Arms Trade, 2023)
5. [The Economic Impact of Arms Spending in Germany, Italy and Spain](#), (2024)
6. Shadow World Investigations: [Newsletter sign-up](#)
7. [Military Spending Rises and Greenhouse Gas Emissions: What Does the Research Say?](#) (Scientists for Global Responsibility, 2025).
8. **Tipping Point North South / Transform Defence Project**: Key resources on military emissions, spending, and climate finance:



- [Military emissions reporting & UNFCCC](#) (2022)
  - [Military spending & emissions & climate finance](#) (2022)
  - [Military spending & climate finance & UN](#) (2024)
  - [NATO 3.5% - military spending & emissions](#) (2025)
9. [Defence Industry Human Rights Due Diligence Guidance](#)  
(American Bar Association, Center for Human Rights, 2022)
  10. [EU-Funded TildeOpen LLM – European AI initiative:](#)
  11. [Material Realities: Who Needs “Critical Minerals” and at Whose Expense?](#)  
(Global Justice Now, 2025)
  12. [Blood on the Green Deal: How the EU Is Boosting the Mining and Defence Industries in the Name of Climate Action](#), (Corporate Europe Observatory & Observatoire des Multinationales, 2023)