



## Policy Brief

# Disarmament for Climate Justice and Health Equity

Prepared by: Working Group on Peace and Climate Justice of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), June 2025



### Executive Summary

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)—a global federation of medical professionals and Nobel Peace Prize laureate—calls on all UNFCCC Parties to recognize the deep linkages between militarisation, climate change, and public health. The health impacts of the climate crisis are growing, while global military spending has reached

\$2.72 trillion in 2024. Climate finance remains grossly insufficient, and military emissions are still exempt from binding UNFCCC reporting. IPPNW urges a full accounting of military emissions and the redirection of resources and priorities from destruction to preservation—of lives, ecosystems, and all our futures.

### Key Health-Centered Policy Asks to All COP Parties

#### 1. Include Military Emissions in Binding UNFCCC Reporting

Military activities significantly drive climate breakdown, with direct health consequences. Full, robust, transparent and mandatory reporting is essential to align emissions reductions with the 1.5°C target.

#### 2. Redirect Military Spending to Climate Finance and Health Resilience

Massive global arms expenditures should be reallocated to meet climate finance and health system adaptation needs, especially in vulnerable countries.

#### 3. Reject Nuclear Power as a Health Hazard and Link to Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear energy endangers health throughout its fuel cycle and delays a just transition to clean, safe energy systems. It provides a gateway to nuclear weapons production as demonstrated by the Indian, Pakistani, Israeli and North Korean weapons programs.

#### 4. Advance Nuclear Disarmament as a Climate and Health Imperative

Like climate change, nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to human survival. COP parties should recognize this link and support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

### Militarisation Is a Climate and Public Health Emergency

Militaries are among the largest institutional emitters of greenhouse gases, contributing an estimated 5.5% of global emissions<sup>1</sup>—more than civil aviation. Yet under current UNFCCC protocols, their emissions reporting remains voluntary.

» The climate crisis is impacting health in a myriad of ways, though increasingly frequent extreme weather events, the disruption of food systems, increases in zoonoses and food-, water- and vector-borne diseases, and mental health issues. Furthermore, the climate crisis is undermining many of the social determinants for good health.

» The climate costs of war and militarisation are profound: three years of the war in Ukraine released 230 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup>—as much as Austria, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia in one year—while also decimating the healthcare system and displacing millions.

» A recent study argues, that an increase in military spending of one percentage point of GDP increases overall national

1 Stuart Parkinson, Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) with Linsey Cottrell, Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) (2022): Estimating the Military's Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions. [https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating\\_Global\\_Military\\_GHG\\_Emissions\\_Nov22\\_rev.pdf](https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating_Global_Military_GHG_Emissions_Nov22_rev.pdf)

2 Initiative on GHG Accounting of War (2025): Climate Damage Caused by Russia's War in Ukraine. 24 February 2022 - 23 February 2025. [https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250224\\_ClimateDamageWarUkraine36monthsENprelim-1.pdf](https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/20250224_ClimateDamageWarUkraine36monthsENprelim-1.pdf)

emissions by between 0.9% and 2.0%<sup>3</sup>. With NATO's planned increase in military spending (3.5% and excluding the US) we can expect additional emissions of up to 194 m T of CO<sub>2</sub> per year from this 31 country military-industrial complex alone<sup>4</sup>. That is equivalent to 51 coal-fired power plants operating for one year.<sup>5</sup>

» Military emissions cause respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, due to PM 2.5, nitrogen oxides, ozone and other pollutants, while conflict zones see surges in trauma, infectious disease outbreaks, and maternal and child mortality. Wars pollute and destroy ecosystems during and even long after they have ceased: Israel's genocidal war on Gaza leaves thousands dead and injured, land and water systems close to permanent breakdown, arable soil destroyed. Which, with increasing drought, will cause crop failures and further food shortages long in the future.

Militarisation worsens the climate crisis and accelerates health emergencies. Wars disrupt ecosystems and reduce biodiversity. We cannot protect planetary or human health without confronting the emissions and destruction of war.

## Divert Arms Budgets Toward Health and Climate Justice

The Stockholm International Peace Research institute (SIPRI) reports global military spending reached \$2718 billion in 2024<sup>6</sup>, a 9.4% increase, while climate finance remains drastically underfunded.

» At COP29, the commitment to mobilize \$300 billion/year by 2035 was far short of the \$2.3 trillion/year<sup>7</sup> needed by 2030 in the Global South.

» In contrast, over \$91.3 billion/year is spent globally on nuclear weapons alone, NATO's \$1.51 trillion military spending in 2024 could fund the \$300 billion climate pledge for 5 years.

» Health systems are under strain worldwide. The direct damage costs of climate change to health (excluding costs in health-determining sectors such as agriculture, water and san-

itation) are estimated to be between US\$ 2–4 billion per year by 2030.<sup>8</sup> These crises require financing, not fighter jets.

Reductions in military spending would free fiscal space for climate adaptation, loss and damage finance, clean energy access, and universal healthcare—core components of global security.

## Nuclear Power: A Health and Safety Risk

Despite claims of being “carbon-neutral”, nuclear power is a false solution. There are high carbon emissions during construction, maintenance and decommissioning. Nuclear energy remains dangerous, expensive, and incompatible with a healthy, just energy transition:

» Nuclear power generation exposes workers and communities to radiation risks from uranium mining to waste storage.<sup>9</sup>

» Accidents and evacuations (e.g., Fukushima, Chernobyl) leave long-term health legacies: e.g. cancers, birth defects, and psychological trauma.

» Its reliance on centralized, inflexible grids undermines the scaling of clean, decentralized renewables.

» Only 31 of 195 countries operate nuclear power plants. Many of the top five nuclear energy nations (USA, China, France, Russia, Japan) are among the largest investors in nuclear weapons.

Nuclear energy contributes to insecurity, not health or sustainability. It must be rapidly phased out and replaced with people-centered renewable energy.

## Nuclear Weapons Are a Health and Climate Catastrophe

A single “limited” nuclear conflict could trigger global famine and collapse food systems. IPPNW research shows that a nuclear war between India and Pakistan could cause 2 billion deaths worldwide due to climatic aftershocks and harvest failures—even if only 3% of global arsenals are used.<sup>10</sup>

» Nuclear winter scenarios show sharp drops in sunlight, temperatures, and rainfall, disrupting staple crop growth and triggering global starvation.

3 Balázs Markó (2024): The Green Peace Dividend: the Effects of Militarization on Emissions and the Green Transition.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383529958\\_The\\_Green\\_Peace\\_Dividend\\_the\\_Effects\\_of\\_Militarization\\_on\\_Emissions\\_and\\_the\\_Green\\_Transition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383529958_The_Green_Peace_Dividend_the_Effects_of_Militarization_on_Emissions_and_the_Green_Transition)

4 Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) (2025): How increasing global military expenditure threatens SDG 13 on Climate action.

<https://ceobs.org/how-increasing-global-military-expenditure-threatens-sdg-13-on-climate-action/>

5 EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator.

<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator#results>

6 SIPRI (2025): Fact Sheet. Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2024.

[https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504\\_fs\\_milex\\_2024.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504_fs_milex_2024.pdf)

7 Amar Bhattacharya, Vera Songwe, Nicholas Stern, Eléonore Soubeyran (2024): Raising ambition and accelerating delivery of climate finance. Third report of the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance.

[https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Raising-ambition-and-accelerating-delivery-of-climate-finance\\_Executive-summary.pdf](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Raising-ambition-and-accelerating-delivery-of-climate-finance_Executive-summary.pdf)

8 WHO (2023): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>

9 Ray Acheson, Katrin Geyer, Genevieve Riccoboni, Laura Varella (WILPF) (2024): 'Petrobromance', Nuclear Priesthood, and Police Repression: Feminist Confrontations of Violent Industries, and Movements to Abolish Them.

<https://www.wilpf.org/publications/petrobromance-nuclear-priesthood-and-police-repression-feminist-confrontations-of-violent-industries-and-movements-to-abolish-them/>

10 Matt Bivens (IPPNW) (2022): Nuclear Famine.

<https://www.ippnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ENGLISH-Nuclear-Famine-Report-Final-bleed-marks.pdf>

- » Even in peacetime, nuclear weapons programs cause toxic contamination and cancer clusters near test and production sites.<sup>11</sup>

The climate crisis increases the risks of conflict, including nuclear war. Disarmament is a vital step toward planetary health.

## Conclusion: Health, Peace, and Climate Must Be One Agenda

The climate crisis is the greatest health threat of the 21st century. Militarisation and nuclearism undermine the health, stability, and environmental integrity we need to overcome it.

### IPPNW urges all COP Parties to:

- » Make military emissions reporting mandatory and transparent.
- » Reallocate military budgets to public health, renewable energy, and climate finance.
- » Phase out nuclear energy and weapons as part of a just, peaceful transition.
- » Integrate health equity and conflict prevention into all climate policies.

The protection of human and planetary health demands disarmament and decarbonisation. The time to act is now.

---

11 Arjun Makhijani and Tilman Ruff (IPPNW and ICAN) (2023): The Devastating Consequences of Nuclear Testing. Effects of Nuclear Weapons Testing on Health and the Environment.  
<https://survivors.ippnw.de/index.php?elD=dumpFile&t=f&f=13013&token=3661e-8f57aa3c3b7d8a2f8c4823bd7a806b23e0b>



[ippnw.de/bit/peace-climate](http://ippnw.de/bit/peace-climate)



**Information by the German affiliate of IPPNW**  
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War /  
Physicians in Social Responsibility e. V. (IPPNW)  
Frankfurter Allee 3, 10247 Berlin, Tel. +49 (30) 69 80 740, [www.  
ippnw.de](http://www.ippnw.de), [kontakt@ippnw.de](mailto:kontakt@ippnw.de), V.i.S.d.P: Dr. Angelika Claußen,

Support  
our work:



SozialBank