
23rd June 2021

Open Letter

Prime Minister Mario Draghi
Italian Presidency G20, Co-Chair COP26

Mr. Luigi di Maio
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Host Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers Meeting, Matera, June 29

Dear Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-Operation,

The global military: clock is ticking on fulfilling its responsibility in reaching net-zero

The world must cut global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by *at least* 50% by 2030 if we are to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C – we have less than nine years.¹ While all aspects of human activity are required to urgently decarbonise, one sector remains out of view: the global military.

The global military is currently exempt from compulsory reporting of GHG emissions to the UN/IPCC. Some countries, including the USA, the UK and Germany, *voluntarily* report, but this is a bare-minimum disclosure as the IPCC template and codes have only a handful of items mentioning domestic military-related activities.

This means the public and policy makers are unable to obtain an accurate picture of the global military's overall contribution to climate heating – from its massive fossil fuel consumption both domestically and overseas to its military exercises and expeditions; from the impacts of conflict and war to GHG emissions arising from post-conflict reconstruction or nation re-building.²

As a result, the global military, a significant contributor to climate change over decades, continues to carry out its business as usual. Its emissions are estimated to be several percent of total global carbon emissions and are comparable with the carbon emissions of civilian aviation.³ Military organizations' efforts to use renewable energy for installations and achieve greater efficiencies in operations are a start, but as yet insufficient and do not address the root cause – namely, modern militaries are completely dependent on fossil fuels and are among the biggest institutional consumers of oil in the world, with no sign of realistic or practical net-zero plans to offset their carbon emissions.

Dr Hoesung Lee, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and Dr Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency⁴ have said: “Decarbonising entire economies means tackling sectors where emissions are especially difficult to reduce, such as shipping, trucks, aviation, heavy industries like steel, cement and chemicals, and agriculture.”

The global military must be added to this list.

As part of climate change-related discussions at the joint session of Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers meeting in Matera, Italy on June 29 and, critically, in advance of the COP26 UN Climate Conference in November with UK and Italy as Co-Chairs, the time has come for the world's leading military spending nations to acknowledge the deliberate omission of full compulsory military emissions reporting, the consequential knowledge gap, and the imperative for the world's militaries to transform themselves and help the world reach net-zero.

The G20 nations (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK, USA and the European Union) comprise 87% of annual global military spending.⁵

Foreign policy is inextricably linked to military spending; large military spending budgets are inextricably linked to emissions; these in turn are a significant contributor to climate change, which, as we all know, is wreaking the most devastating effect on international development, with the greatest burden falling on the poorest people on the planet.

Therefore, this matter is profoundly relevant to G20 Foreign Affairs and Development Ministers as they address 'People, Planet and Prosperity'.

To fully comply with the urgent need to reach net-zero, we call upon the G20 nations to support:

1. AN IPCC TASK FORCE FOR DECARBONISATION OF MILITARIES AND MILITARY TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES. This task force should investigate the climate impact of the military/military technology sectors and devise proposals to address existing (and prevent further) damage. The task force should explore options and recommend solutions to fully decarbonise the world's militaries and military technology industries without resorting to solutions that have other adverse environmental and social impacts (eg nuclear power and biofuels). Among these solutions should be proposals to transform military assets into climate-resilience hubs in vulnerable communities and countries, explore demilitarisation options, and enhance sustainable human security as defined by the United Nations.

2. AN IPCC SPECIAL REPORT on the role of the global militaries and military technology industries in contributing to climate change, assessing existing and future social and environmental impacts and exploring response options.

3. COMPULSORY SUBMISSIONS TO THE IPCC/UNFCCC OF FULL GHG MILITARY EMISSIONS REPORTING BY ALL NATIONS. Nations' militaries, military industries, and attendant conflicts and wars must be included in their GHG emission reporting and carbon-reduction targets. This reporting must also include emissions incurred overseas, especially for nations with overseas bases. The Task Force on National GHG Inventories must look into how to incorporate these into the next Refinement to the IPCC Guidelines for National GHG Inventories.

4. NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCs): ALL COUNTRIES TO INCLUDE THEIR MILITARIES AND MILITARY TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES IN THEIR GHG EMISSION REDUCTION PLANS AND TARGETS, taking into account *total carbon bootprints* of their militaries and military technology industries. Governments and militaries to publish their plans to decarbonise to meet the net-zero goal: simple technical measures (e.g. solar panels on military bases or electric killer drones) are not adequate and cannot be substitutes for serious demilitarisation options.

Critical relationship to international development and the SDGs

Calculating and addressing the carbon burden of conflict and war means acknowledging the impact of military activity on conflict-driven poverty and displacement. It also means addressing the untold billions of dollars in military spending that is spent unnecessarily — as a consequence of waste, fraud and abuse — on many nations' military spending and which should now be part of all discussions concerning funding sources to plug the significant SDGs funding gap.

Climate change related concerns of civil society must not be side-lined. In a climate-changed world that urgently needs to get to net-zero, this is yet one more challenging social and environmental justice issue for the G20 meetings of 2021 which can no longer be swept under the carpet.

Yours sincerely,

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Co-Founders *Tipping Point North South/Transform Defence Project*

Supporting Signatories

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¹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

² 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 Footprint of the US Military,"* 2019, <https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tran.12319>; Various reports by Stuart Parkinson and colleagues, Scientists for Global Responsibility, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/projects/climate-change-military-main-outputs>.

³ 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/>; Various reports by Stuart Parkinson and colleagues, Scientists for Global Responsibility, <https://www.sgr.org.uk/projects/climate-change-military-main-outputs>.

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2020/07/31/energy-climatechallenge/>

⁵ *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2020*, SIPRI, <https://sipri.org/publications/2021/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2020>