

WILPF Statement on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending

12 April 2011

On 11 April 2011, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) [announced](#) that known world military expenditure in 2010 was more than \$1,630 billion, which is an increase of 1.3 percent from 2009. SIPRI notes that the United States alone is responsible for the increase in spending in real terms. SIPRI also records rapid increases in spending in South America (5.8 percent, for a total of \$63.3 billion) and Africa (5.2 percent, to \$30.1 billion). Military spending increased slower than usual in the Middle East and Asia and Oceania, and dropped 2.8 percent in Europe.

Military investments are underpinned by a belief that states' security can be guaranteed by threats of violence. It's an investment in war and conflict. And while government's use the language of security and protection to justify their excessive investment in military hardware and personnel, it is usually civilians that pay the highest price—with their lives, livelihoods, and rights—when states go to war. Given the numerous crises facing the planet—economic, environmental, food, water, health, energy—it is imperative to build on WILPF's call to shift money wasted on excessive military spending to human needs and rights. This challenges militarism by calling on governments to stop spending disproportionate financial, technological, and human resources on militaries and demands governments invest in peace.

WILPF has led a movement for 95 years that emphasizes these links between military expenditure, the arms trade, violent conflict, and the reduction of available resources for social and economic development and the promotion of gender equality. We have highlighted this problem many times before, such as during the [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign](#) in December 2010, where WILPF sections researched, compiled, and calculated data on governments' military versus social services spending; [WILPF's statement to the UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) in September 2010; and in WILPF's pamphlet *[You Get What You Pay For](#)*, which contrasts military spending with the amounts of money needed to achieve the MDGs.

Above all else, weapons are tools of violence and repression by those that use them and tools of financial gain by those who make and sell them. The international arms trade is a booming industry and the international systems that were created to uphold international law and secure human rights have been subordinated to the economic and political interests of governments and corporations. While many states promote themselves as advocates for international peace, justice, and security, and claim to promote international disarmament, the same states are often leaders in the international arms trade, which contributes to fueling conflicts, human rights violations, and disrupting peace processes. As WILPF pointed out in a [statement on UN Security Council resolution 1973](#), “during the time of friendship with Gaddafi, the UK, Italy, France, Portugal, Belgium and Russia with a healthy contribution from General Dynamics, ensured that Gaddafi had sufficient arms, bullets, tanks and aircraft to control his population. The same had been sold or given to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, and of course, Saudi Arabia and Israel.”

As a result, funds reserved for development initiatives are increasingly spent on emergency relief and rehabilitation operations to clean up after violent conflict. And while military expenditures

increase every year, investment in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, development, and disarmament diminishes.

This year, the International Peace Bureau and the Institute for Policy Studies are organizing a [Global Day of Action on Military Spending](#) on 12 April 2011 to coincide with the release of SIPRI's new annual figures on world military expenditure. WILPF is a co-sponsor of this event. On this day, people on all continents will join together in joint actions to focus public, political, and media attention on the costs of military spending and the need for new priorities. Such events will help us to build the international network around this issue and we encourage all WILPF sections and other non-governmental organizations to get involved.