

From military spending to climate finance: what Annex II countries could deliver for Africa

INTRODUCTION

Civil society's efforts to bring the myriad aspects of militarism onto to the formal agenda at recent COPs is gaining momentum. In particular, the fact of unreported military emissions is now widely appreciated and the actions nations need to deal with it are also fully understood.[1]

The matter of runaway military spending – the very thing that enables rising military GHG emissions – is also now becoming more and more linked to the climate finance debates inside UNFCCC meetings. Civil society and a growing number of governments are calling out the need to include public military spending in the effort to fill the enormous climate finance gaps.[2]

Rising military spending by developed nations proves the lie they cannot afford to meet legal and moral obligations to provide climate finance for climate vulnerable countries, to which the African continent is home to many. With every passing year, the numbers show that those same nations find *trillions* to allocate to military budgets, driving both a conventional and nuclear arms race and feeding soaring arms company profits and shareholder dividends.[3]

Moreover, the nations spending most on this insane arms race are those with the greatest historical culpability for the climate emergency whilst also being the ones most vocal about Net Zero, championing targets, transparency and transition.[4] As they expand 'defence' spending, they are drastically cutting international development and climate finance, as they speak about sustainability, so they pour hundreds of billions into fuelling global instability.

These nations cannot be allowed to have it both ways. It must be called out and addressed. This topic sits at the heart of climate justice. It holds up the mirror to how humanity must address this climate emergency – with *equity*, *co-operation*, and *empathy*.

The time is coming where military spending as a climate finance issue will be on the negotiating table. This briefing anticipates the hope that COP32 in Ethiopia – the Africa COP – is that moment.

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[1] https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-and-conflict-related-emissions-report/
[2] https://transformdefence.org/publication/cop29-why-public-military-spending-matters-to-climate-finance-discussions/; https://oilchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/We-Can-Pay-for-It-factsheet-2209.pdf
[3] https://transformdefence.org/publication/excessprofitstax/
[4] https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30196-0/fulltext

GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING FUELS WAR & GHG EMISSIONS

High military spending is the enabler of war. The world is witnessing more wars now in 2026 than any time since WW2.[5] At the same time, global military expenditure reached US$2.887 trillion in 2025, its highest level ever recorded and the eleventh consecutive year of increase ($1.7tr in 2015).[6] Such shifting of expenditure priorities into defence spending heightens the risk of conflict, while robbing the public purse of finances needed to deliver domestic and international climate, driving significant yet poorly accounted-for emissions and compounding the vulnerability of communities and regions already facing the intersecting impacts of conflict and climate change.

In peace-time and in conflict, military expenditure also has major implications for greenhouse gas emissions. Higher military expenditure generally leads to increased military-related carbon-intensive activity (procurement, operations etc). Moreover, the more you spend on big ticket gas-guzzling weaponry (eg fighter jets) the more emissions you emit. Ever rising military expenditure locks in and compounds long-term dependence on fossil fuel-intensive military equipment. Despite calls to the contrary,[7] there remains no obligation upon nations to fully and transparently report their unaccountable military GHG emissions.[8]

The global military GHG carbon footprint is about 5.5% of total global greenhouse gas emissions.[9] This figure includes emissions associated with military operations, infrastructure, procurement and supply chains, but excludes conflict-related emissions (eg active war-fighting and post-conflict reconstruction).

The total emissions of all African nations at under 4%[10] of the global total is less than the GHG emissions of the global military at 5.5%.

CLIMATE FINANCE FOR AFRICA OR EVER RISING MILITARY SPENDING?

THE DIRE STATE OF PUBLIC CLIMATE FINANCE

Rich and developed countries listed in Annex II under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are designated to provide overseas climate finance to developing countries. This obligation is in recognition of historic responsibility of developed nations for climate change. This obligation barely touches the scale of the debt the rich world owes the global south.

Hundreds of billion dollars' worth of wealth and resources are taken out of Africa every year.[11] At the same time, Annex II countries[12] claiming that they cannot meet their public climate finance commitments still manage to spend hundreds of billions annually on their militaries.

[5] https://www.prio.org/news/3719
[6] https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025
[7] https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-and-conflict-related-emissions-report/
[8] https://militaryemissions.org/
[9] https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/estimating-military-s-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions
[10] https://globalcarbonbudget.org/carbonbudget2022/
[11] https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/honest_accounts_2017_web_final_updated.pdf
[12] Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA, and EU

It was therefore no surprise when COP29 in Baku failed spectacularly to deliver an ambitious new climate finance goal. Despite calls for a $1.3 trillion annual goal by 2030, it settled on $300 billion annually for developing countries' climate action by 2035.[13] It still left climate vulnerable nations and regions without adequate resources to address the climate crisis.

Moreover, the Loss & Damage Fund was severely underfunded, with only $700 million pledged against an annual need of $400 billion, and just half of that redeemed. Meanwhile, private finance, which makes up only 2% of climate investments in Africa, was prioritised without equity safeguards.

None of this does anything to provide clean renewable power to the 563 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa who lack access to electricity.[14] **The cost of electrifying all households in 40 Sub-Saharan African countries by 2030 was estimated to be around $203 billion, so $50 billion a year.**[15]

Compare that to the $1.5 trillion spent by Annex II countries on their militaries in 2025.

EVER RISING MILITARY EXPENDITURE

Military spending of Annex II countries (US$bn, at constant 2024 prices and exchange rates)

Rank (SIPRI Top 40)	Country (Annex II)	2015	2025
1	USA	839	929
4	Germany	47	107
6	United Kingdom	67	88
9	France	53	65
10	Japan	37	59
12	Italy	26	45
15	Spain	18	38
16	Canada	22	38
17	Australia	27	35
19	Netherlands	11	27
24	Norway	5.8	16
25	Sweden	5.7	15
27	Denmark	3.9	14
28	Belgium	5.4	14
34	Greece	5.5	7.8
36	Finland	4.1	7.6
37	Switzerland	5.3	7.2
	Austria	3.5	5.9
	Portugal	3.7	5.5
	New Zealand	2.0	2.9
	Ireland	1.2	1.5
	Luxembourg	0.19	0.8
	Iceland	0	0
Total		1,193	1,529

Annex II countries spent $1.5 trillion on the military in 2025, which was a 28% increase of $336 billion (at constant 2024 prices and exchange rates) from 2015, the year of the Paris Agreement.

This was an **average annual increase of $34 billion** just to expand their militaries – more than enough to pay African countries their annual fair share of the 2015 Paris Agreement $100 billion a year climate

[13] https://unfccc.int/news/cop29-un-climate-conference-agrees-to-triple-finance-to-developing-countries-protecting-lives-and
[14] https://www.iea.org/reports/tracking-sdg7-the-energy-progress-report-2026
[15] https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-40612-3

pledge (Africa accounts for around 20% of either global land area or population) if rich countries wanted to keep their promise.

GLOBAL TOP 20 MILITARY SPENDERS & REPARATION

Half of the global top 20 military spenders are also Annex II countries. It is estimated that since 2001 the top 20 military spenders combined dedicated **US$40 trillion** on their militaries and are therefore responsible for at least 10 billion tCO2e of military-related (but not conflict-related) emissions during the first quarter of the 21th century.[16]

As measured by the social cost of carbon, they therefore collectively owe the world, especially the poorest and the most climate vulnerable countries, $2.67 trillion in reparation for their military-GHG-emission-related climate costs.The African continent as a whole still suffers from legacy colonialism and economic exploitation, enabled by world military powers. The claim by African nations' claim for military-emission reparation could not be stronger.

> *"At the African Symposium on Climate Reparations in Mombasa more than 110 participants came together to grapple with this question. The conversations were rich, challenging, and grounded in the realities that communities across the continent are already facing. One message resonated throughout the Symposium: Africa is owed repair, not charity."*
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> *Mohammed Adow, Founder Power Shift Africa (October 2026)*

CLIMATE FINANCE FOR AFRICA 'GROSSLY INADEQUATE'

There is a 'massive gap in climate finance, with a fraction of global climate finance reaching sub-Saharan Africa annually. Much of this funding arrives as loans rather than grants, worsening the continent's debt burden.

> *"Climate disasters are intensifying across the continent and disproportionately affect those least responsible"... 'global climate finance remains grossly inadequate, less than 3% reaches sub-Saharan Africa annually, far below what is needed to address our vulnerabilities."*
>
> *H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission*[17]

THE GROSS INADEQUACY

When compared globally, Africa receives only around 2 percent of total global climate finance.[18]

Overall, total international public and philanthropic climate finance to Africa in the decade 2011 to 2021 totalled $170bn.[19] ($71.1 billion for adaptation, $74.8 billion for mitigation, and $24.6 billion for crosscutting activities. Although adaptation is arguably a more pressing need for Africa, mitigation finance is higher). This is an average of $17 billion p/a in total for 54 African states and more than 1.5 billion people.

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[16] https://transformdefence.org/publication/climate-reparations-for-military-emissions/
[17] https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20260221/african-leaders-call-urgent-overhaul-global-climate-finance-cahoscc-meeting
[18] https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2023/
[19] https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/climate-change.htm

- Africa, despite being highly vulnerable to climate impacts, receives less than 10% of global adaptation finance, leaving over 600 million people at risk of exposure.
- The Green Climate Fund (GCF) allocates USD 10 billion annually, yet Africa receives less than 20%, while Asia and Latin America receive around 60%, with minimal trickle-down to local communities.
- While estimates differ, all evidence points to the adaptation finance needs of NDCs being much higher than current financing. In 2022, $11.4 billion of adaptation finance was disbursed in Africa, which represents only 39 percent of total climate finance committed to the continent annually.[20]

NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS AND CLIMATE FINANCE NEED

It will cost around US$2.8 trillion between 2020 and 2030 to implement all of Africa's NDCs.

- African governments have committed $264 billion of domestic public resources, about 10% of the total cost.
- $2.5 trillion must come from international public sources and the domestic and international private sectors. This external financial support, required beyond domestic public sources, is defined as "climate finance need".
- Therefore, Africa's $2.5 trillion of climate finance needed between 2020 and 2030 requires, on average, **$250 billion a year**.[21] The financing gap is significant.
- Total annual climate finance flows in Africa, domestic and international, were only $30 billion, about 12% of the amount needed.

CONCLUSION

As we approach COP31 mindful of the Africa COP in 2027, this briefing makes the case **that the rapid year on year increases in the military spending of (Annex II) rich countries is evidence enough that there is money available to meet their historic climate obligations** despite claims to the contrary. It is simply a matter of political choice.

Is it to be more weaponry and war, or more climate finance and climate justice?

This briefing calls for:

1. **Redirection of annual military spending of Annex II countries to fund international public climate finance for African nations**

   Since the annual military spending of Annex II countries is so large – just under half the value of the combined African economy at $3.6 trillion –[22] diverting 10% or even 5% of this annual $1.5 trillion military spending to climate finance could achieve significant results for the African continent.

[20] https://gca.org/reports/sta22/
[21] https://fsdafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Climate-Finance-Needs-of-African-Countries1.pdf
[22] https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/profile/AFQ

For example, a mere **5%** of Annex II countries' annual military spending at $1.5tn is **$76 billion a year**, which can readily fund:

- 100% of annual costs to fully electrify all Sub-Saharan African households by 2030. ($50bn a year needed)
- 30% of annual climate finance needed to implement Africa's NDCs by 2030. ($250bn a year needed)

Adding to two of the climate finance option explored in Watts Up Africa's briefing *Africa's Just Transition: Where Will the Money Come From*:[23]

2. International Climate Reparations Fund: Military Emissions

"Africa and the Global South can demand a permanent reparations mechanism, separate from loans or market-based schemes, funded by the Global North to compensate for historical emissions and climate harm."

We suggest **the inclusion of historical military- and conflict-related** emissions and climate harm.

3. Polluter Pays Mechanisms (International): Arms Industries

"African nations can champion a global Loss and Damage tax aimed at historical polluters, such as oil companies, high-emission multinational corporations, and legacy industrial powers."

We suggest **the inclusion of global north multinational arms and military services companies** (eg SIPRI top 100)[24], liable as they are for climate harms caused in peacetime and war and as a direct result of being the supply chain underpinning the high spending fossil-fuel reliant militaries.

NORTH
TIPPING POINT
creative campaigning for global justice
SOUTH

[23] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/657880dcd408ac495a5cc888/t/6accef77f1fb515195c22555/1791815588628/Africas+Just+Transition+Where+Will+the+Money+Come+From+ENG.pdf

[24] https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/sipri-fact-sheets/sipri-top-100-arms-producing-and-military-services-companies-2024