

Press release – New research: NATO standard of 2% GDP leads to a sharp increase in fossil emissions

Press release - October 17, 2023 - In the new Climate Crossfire briefing by Stop Arms Trade, Transnational Institute, and Tipping Point North South, the climate impact of the NATO standard that countries must spend 2% of their GDP on military expenditure is examined, of which at least 20% on new weapons. This standard has been generally accepted in a short time, but has no scientific basis whatsoever. The contrast between NATO's objective and that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) could not be greater. The IPCC states that fossil emissions must be reduced by 43% by 2030 to keep the temperature increase below 1.5°C. Although the IPCC relies on the best available climate science, it is largely ignored.

The NATO 2% standard makes it even more difficult to achieve the IPCC target, because increasing military expenditure will significantly increase military fossil emissions and divert money from financing climate policy.

What exactly does the NATO standard mean for greenhouse gas emissions, what are the financial and environmental consequences in the coming decade, and how will the arms industry benefit from this?

The researchers from Stop Arms Trade, Transnational Institute and Tipping Point North South note, among other things, that:

- * NATO's military fossil footprint increased from 196 million tons of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e) in 2021 to 226 million tCO₂e in 2023 – 30 million tons more in two years, equivalent to more than 8 million additional cars.
- * If all NATO members meet the 2% of GDP target between 2021 and 2028, their total combined military fossil footprint will amount to 2 billion tCO₂e.
- * NATO's estimated fossil emissions this year - 205 million tCO₂e - can be compared with the fossil emissions of countries. If the NATO armed forces were to form one country, NATO would be the 40th largest fossil polluter.
- * NATO military spending increased from \$1.16 trillion to \$1.26 trillion between 2021 and 2023. If all 31 member states achieve the standard of at least 2% GDP, total expenditure between 2021 and 2028 will amount to an estimated \$11.8 trillion.
- * Of NATO countries' \$1.26 trillion in military spending by 2023, 12 years of unfulfilled climate financing promises of \$100 billion per year could have been paid to the most vulnerable countries.
- * If every NATO member met the 2% GDP target for military spending, NATO would spend an additional \$2.57 trillion by 2028, enough to meet the climate adaptation costs of low- and middle-income countries for seven years, based estimated by the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).
- * European NATO members must spend an additional €1 trillion to meet the 2% GDP target, roughly the same as the €1 trillion needed for the European Green Deal.
- * NATO member states export weapons to 39 of the 40 countries most vulnerable to climate change. This increases the risk of armed conflict and oppression at a time of dangerous climate crisis.

Nnimmo Bassey, former president of Friends of the Earth International and director of the Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Nigeria, writes in the foreword: “Wars kill people, destroy biodiversity and damage infrastructure that could have protected against extreme weather events. Warfare is an act of climate denial.”

Wendela de Vries, researcher at Stop Arms Trade: “High military expenditure leads to more fossil emissions, which does not make the world safer. The big winner is the arms industry, whose profits are skyrocketing. With the planet in the midst of an extreme climate crisis, it is madness to invest in making arms industry shareholders even richer, instead of protecting those whose lives are threatened by climate collapse.”

Nick Buxton, of Transnational Institute, said: “This report shows how the climate is yet another victim of war. We have little time left to stop the climate crisis, but international political leaders are more concerned with arming themselves to the teeth than committing fully to climate action. NATO's 2% target adds fuel to the climate fire, diverts valuable resources from climate financing and increases greenhouse gas emissions. If we want to defend our planet, we must de-escalate and find peaceful solutions to conflict. No country is safe on an unsafe planet.”

Dr. Ho-Chih Lin and Deborah Burton from Tipping Point North South:

“The armed forces like to portray themselves as climate protectors, but they are the largest institutional user of fossil fuels. Fossil-free fighter planes or electric tanks do not exist and in the short term there is no technology that will seriously reduce the military fossil footprint. Not in our lifetime and not before 2050. The only way to green the armed forces is to significantly reduce military expenditure. To do this, we must rethink the concept of security and invest in diplomacy, peace and a resilient climate, instead of war.”

Climate crossfire – How NATO's 2% military spending targets contribute to climate breakdown

Full report – English <<https://stop-Weaponhandel.org/klimaat-kruisvuur/>>

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