



Nuclear weapons versus the sustainable development goals

By Alyn Ware, October 2016

Excerpt from [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#)

On September 25th 2015, member countries of the United Nations adopted a set of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. This was followed by the adoption of a specific plan of action to address climate change at the COP 21 Conference in Paris in December 2015. SDG 16 has a special relevance, calling for 'peaceful and inclusive societies'.

The achievement of the SDGs and the implementation of the COP 21 will depend on political will and the allocation of sufficient resources. Progress on nuclear disarmament would assist in achieving these goals in four key ways:

1. Through the re-allocation of financial, scientific, intellectual, political and personnel resources from nuclear weapons to SDG implementation;
2. Reducing tensions and conflicts currently perpetuated by nuclear threat postures, and the increased cooperation that would occur from joint verification of nuclear disarmament agreements, would enhance the cooperation and trust required for SDG implementation;
3. Ending the production and testing of nuclear weapons which create catastrophic impacts on the environment for current and future generations;
4. Preventing the use of nuclear weapons in an armed conflict, which would cause even greater human and environmental consequences, and would likely trigger a global nuclear holocaust from which there would be zero chance of achieving the SDGs.

The relationship between disarmament and development has been widely recognized for many decades. Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, for example, places an obligation on the UN Security Council to facilitate disarmament *“in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.”*

However, the vested interests of the permanent members of the Security Council – the world's largest weapons manufacturers and exporters – have so far prevented concrete. Costa Rica raised this issue in the Security Council in 2008, but did not have sufficient support to achieve anything concrete.

In September 2015, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev made a specific proposal to the UN General Assembly that every country contribute 1% of their military spending to fund the Sustainable Development Goals. However, this proposal has not yet been picked up by other countries or adopted by the UN.

It is therefore up to civil society, working in cooperation with legislators, to highlight the connection between nuclear disarmament and sustainable development, and to build cooperation between the nuclear disarmament and SDG communities. In this way we can build a more powerful movement, develop traction on international initiatives to 'move the money' to SDGs, and ensure success of the core goals – SDG implementation and nuclear abolition.

“The threats to our planet – of climate change, poverty and war – can only be overcome by nations and the **global community working in cooperation** – something not possible while nations maintain large and expensive militaries and threaten to destroy each other.

When one year of global military spending equals **six hundred years of the UN operating budget**, are we truly committing ourselves to a world with increased cooperation and reduced conflicts?”

PNND Co-Presidents Statement on the International Women's Day for Disarmament, May 24, 2008

“The 100 billion dollars spent annually on nuclear weapons should be channeled instead to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals**, as well as the urgent **climate change adaptation** needs of the most vulnerable countries.”

Saber Chowdhury MP, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union