

Disarming the Climate Crisis: The True Cost of Militarism

COP30, Belém, Brazil

13 November 2025

Organised by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Peace Boat, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Peace Track Initiative



Introduction:

Centring Demilitarisation in Climate Policy



The UN Climate Change Conference, COP30, took place in Belém, Brazil, at the mouth of the Amazon River, a region symbolic of both the urgency of the climate crisis and the leadership of Indigenous and frontline communities. Framed as the "Amazon COP," negotiations focused on adaptation, climate finance, forest protection and just transition. Yet the summit again failed to address the structural forces driving climate breakdown. Despite record participation from Indigenous peoples, issues such as peace and demilitarisation remained marginal within the formal agenda.

Against this backdrop, the side event Disarming the Climate Crisis: The True Cost of Militarism convened researchers, advocates and community leaders to examine how militarism accelerates climate breakdown and obstructs climate justice. Co-organised by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Peace Boat, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Peace Track Initiative, the event reflected concerns raised by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva at the World Leaders Summit preceding COP30. Lula stated:

"If the men who wage war were at COP30, it would be much cheaper to spend 1.3 trillion dollars a year to end the climate problem than 2.7 trillion dollars to wage war as they did last year."

His remarks underscored a fundamental contradiction: governments claim that climate action lacks adequate financing while global military expenditure continues to rise, generating emissions, fuelling conflict and diverting resources urgently needed for a just transition.

At COP30, the Baku Hub Annual High-Level Dialogue sought to "advance peace-positive climate action." It was the sole official COP session addressing peace and climate justice, highlighting the persistent exclusion of this issue within the UNFCCC. Previous summits introduced modest advances, including peace days at COP28 and COP29 and the COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace. At COP30, even these limited mechanisms disappeared.

Opening the event, moderator Karen Hallows, International Coordinator at Peace Boat and Co-Lead of the Peace and Demilitarisation Working Group of the [Women and Gender Constituency](#), emphasised the systematic exclusion of militarism from climate policy. Militarism, she noted, is not confined to armies or weaponry; it is an organising system that prioritises domination, extraction and control over care, cooperation and justice. Rooted in patriarchal power structures, militarism fuels conflict, drives inequality and diverts trillions of dollars away from effective climate solutions. Military emissions are not required for reporting under the UNFCCC, are absent from Nationally Determined Contributions, and military spending remains outside climate finance frameworks. Likewise, extractivism, occupation and nuclear violence are treated as external to climate policy rather than systemic drivers of harm.

The event analysed six interconnected dimensions of this crisis: military emissions, military spending, fossil fuels and conflict, extractivism in Colombia and the Philippines, fossil-fuel-enabled occupation and genocide in Palestine, and nuclear injustice in the Pacific. Collectively, the speakers demonstrated how feminist and peace-based approaches provide essential pathways to climate justice.



Military Emissions and the Data Gap

Ellie Kinney, Senior Climate Advocacy Officer, Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS)



Armed conflict has escalated to levels not seen since the Second World War, producing severe humanitarian harm, mass displacement and long-term environmental degradation. Yet the climate impacts of militarism remain poorly understood because global military emissions are largely unreported.

Ellie Kinney noted that examining these emissions does not detract from human suffering but exposes the broader and longer-term consequences of militarism, stating that "the impacts are even greater than we know, with long-term consequences stretching into the future in the form of climate impacts."

The [Conflict and Environment Observatory \(CEOBS\)](#) attempts to assess military emissions using UNFCCC data revealed that most governments do not report them. Ellie explained that "because governments are not required to report military emissions, we are operating with a massive data blind spot that conceals a large source of greenhouse gases," constituting what CEOBS terms the military emissions gap.

Researchers estimate that global militaries account for approximately 5.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions in peacetime. If treated as a single country, armed forces would rank as the world's fourth-largest emitter, surpassing Russia and exceeding the annual emissions of the entire African continent.



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Only five Annex I countries report military emissions in line with voluntary guidelines. Twenty-three non-Annex I countries report none, including major military spenders such as India, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Conflict-related emissions are also unreported. Independent studies show that the first three years of the war in Ukraine generated emissions equivalent to 120 million petrol cars operating for one year. Research from Queen Mary University of London estimates that destruction and reconstruction in Gaza will produce emissions greater than those of 135 states.

Meanwhile, military expenditure continues to rise. EU member states are projected to spend 800 billion euros on defence by 2030 under the ReArm Europe Plan. NATO's increased spending targets could generate an estimated 298 billion dollars in annual climate damages. Ellie called for mandatory reporting of military emissions, their inclusion in NDCs and global stocktakes, and a shift toward peacebuilding and human security.



Military Spending and Climate Finance

**Deborah Burton, Co-Founder,
Tipping Point North South**



Deborah Burton explained that fossil fuels have long been central to global military power. Coal underpinned the British Empire, while oil facilitated the rise of the United States as a military superpower. Contemporary militaries rely heavily on fossil-fuel-intensive systems, including fighter jets, warships and armoured vehicles.

She highlighted the strong correlation between military spending and military emissions. Research from [Scientists for Global Responsibility](#) estimates that every additional 100 billion dollars in military spending generates approximately 32 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Global military expenditure reached 2.7 trillion dollars in 2024, the highest level ever recorded. The top twenty military spenders account for more than 80 percent of global expenditure. Deborah emphasised that this escalation is occurring despite the world surpassing 1.5°C of warming.

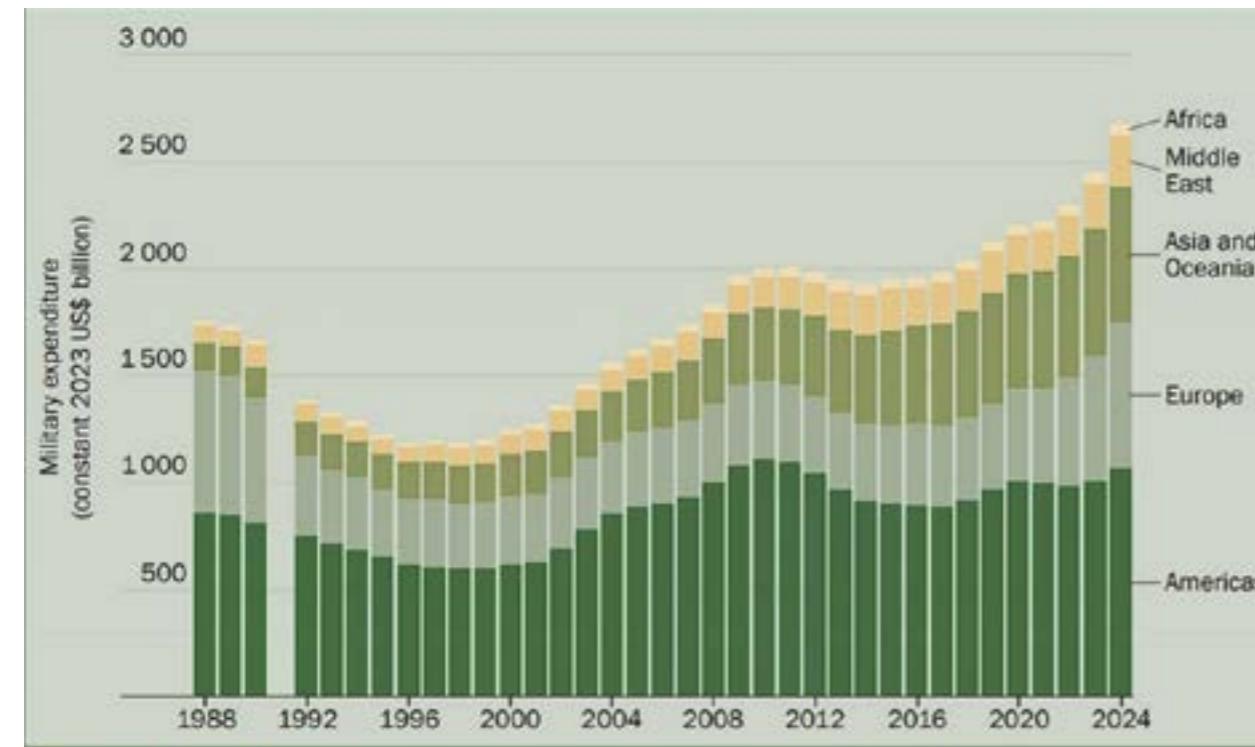


Figure 1. World military expenditure, by region, 1988–2024

Note: The absence of data for the Soviet Union in 1991 means that no total can be calculated for that year.

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr. 2025.

She warned that climate finance is now "in a fight for its life" against military budgets. Civil society called for five trillion dollars annually in climate finance at COP29. Governments instead committed to only 300 billion dollars per year by 2035.

NATO's new spending target of 3.5 percent of GDP would result in 13.4 trillion dollars in military expenditures over five years. The increase alone, 2.6 trillion dollars, could provide nearly three years of developing countries' climate finance needs at one trillion dollars per year or fully fund a global upgrade of electricity grids to make them net-zero compatible by 2030.

Deborah presented findings from the Tipping Point North South (TPNS) report [Climate Reparations for Military Emissions](#). It estimates that the top twenty military spenders are responsible for at least ten billion tonnes of military-related emissions since 2001, creating 2.67 trillion

dollars in climate damages owed to vulnerable countries. For Palestine, a [briefing](#), produced with the Palestine Institute for Climate Strategy, estimates 148 billion dollars in reparations are owed by Israel and its allies for military and conflict-related emissions since 1948.

She concluded that claims of insufficient climate finance are untenable when contrasted with global military spending. Redirecting meaningful percentages of these budgets, and formally including military spending on the UNFCCC agenda, is necessary to strengthen climate finance and reduce emissions.

In relation to climate change, there is a direct correlation between military spending and military emissions – the more you spend on big ticket fossil fuel-reliant weaponry – warships, jets, tanks, bombs, missiles – the more you emit.



Fossil Fuels, Militarism and the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Maria Reyes, Global Outreach
Coordinator, Fossil Fuel Non-
Proliferation Treaty Initiative



Maria Reyes, Global Outreach Coordinator at the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative](#), spoke about the deep and often overlooked connections between fossil fuels, militarism and conflict. She explained that fossil fuels have played a decisive role in shaping and intensifying war for decades, with an estimated 25 to 50 percent of interstate conflicts since 1973 linked to oil. Modern militaries remain profoundly dependent on fossil fuels, and extraction zones are frequently militarised by state forces, private security companies and paramilitary actors.

Maria described how fossil fuel extraction entrenches inequality, political instability, gender-based violence and ecological destruction. Communities living near extraction sites often experience land grabs, water contamination, forced displacement and repression, while profits flow to political and economic elites and transnational corporations. Drawing on examples from her home country of Mexico, she highlighted heavily militarised oil and gas corridors in Veracruz, Tabasco and Tamaulipas, where disappearances, torture and forced displacement are widespread. Women and LGBTQ+ defenders face particularly acute risks in these regions.

THREE PILLAR TREATY



NON-PROLIFERATION PILLAR
The Non-Proliferation Pillar would end the expansion of coal, oil and gas production

FAIR PHASE-OUT PILLAR
The Fair-Phase-Out Pillar would direct the wind-down of existing fossil fuel production, where nations with the capacity and historical responsibility for emissions transition fastest, providing support to others around the world

JUST TRANSITION PILLAR
The Just Transition Pillar would fast track the adoption of clean energy and economic diversification away from fossil fuels so that no worker, community or country is left behind



The Governments of Colombia and the Netherlands announced at COP30 that they will co-host the First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in 2026.

and the first collective agreement to "transition away from fossil fuels" appearing at COP28. Even then, the UNFCCC still does not regulate fossil fuel production itself.

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty addresses this gap through three core pillars. The first is non-proliferation, which calls for an immediate end to new fossil fuel extraction and infrastructure. The second is a fair, managed and science-based phase-out of existing fossil fuel production. The third pillar is a just transition, which focuses on international cooperation, finance and support so that workers, communities and countries can move away from fossil fuels in an equitable and inclusive way.

Maria emphasised that the Just Transition pillar goes beyond economic adjustment. It creates space to challenge and transform the extractivist, patriarchal and colonial systems that have shaped the fossil fuel economy and driven widespread harm. By addressing historical responsibility and power imbalances, this pillar seeks to tackle the root causes of the climate crisis as well as related patterns of conflict, violence, insecurity, human rights violations and war.

She further highlighted that the Treaty is framed as a cooperative and non-militarised response to the climate crisis, drawing inspiration from successful international agreements such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Montreal Protocol and the Landmine Treaty. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty is currently endorsed by eighteen states and supported by thousands of scientists, parliamentarians, Indigenous leaders, cities and civil society organisations worldwide.

With COP30 once again failing to agree on a fossil fuel phase-out, Maria stressed that the relevance of the Treaty has grown significantly. The upcoming first International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels, to be held in Colombia in April 2026, is a crucial step toward building global momentum for a peaceful, just and science-based transition beyond fossil fuels.

She argued that the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty has become essential for both climate action and peacebuilding because existing climate frameworks have historically avoided addressing fossil fuels directly. For nearly three decades of UN climate negotiations, fossil fuels were not explicitly named in COP decisions. Only in recent years did this begin to change, with limited references emerging after COP27

A Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty has become essential for both climate and peace.



Militarised Extractivism and Feminist Resistance in Colombia

Natalia Chaves Monroy, Women, Peace and Security Coordinator, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Colombia



Natalia Chaves Monroy of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Colombia examined the intersection of militarisation, extractivism and climate injustice in Colombia. She noted that geopolitical dynamics and corporate interests increasingly shape environmental policy, often shielding high-emitting actors from accountability and exacerbating global inequalities.

Natalia described how militarisation secures extractive projects, consolidates control over land and reinforces systems of domination. Extractive industries such as mining, oil and gas are frequently accompanied by armed forces, paramilitaries and private security, fostering environments in which violence and ecological destruction are intertwined. These systems affect ecosystems and inflict direct harm on communities, particularly women. As she stated, "patriarchal, militaristic, extractivist and capitalist structures operate simultaneously on women's bodies and on the land."

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The intersection between the climate crisis, extractivism, and the militarization of territories represents one of the most significant challenges to the survival of communities, ecosystems, and livelihoods around the world.

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gender-based violence. Defending land and water situates these women at the intersection of climate breakdown, militarisation, racism and inequality. Environmental degradation caused by extractive operations is also associated with displacement, food insecurity and cultural erosion.

Natalia explained that militarisation accelerates ecological destruction by contributing to deforestation, contamination and weakened community stewardship. Colombia's history of armed conflict further entrenches militarised responses in situations where dialogue and community participation are essential.

She outlined WILPF Colombia's feminist peacebuilding approach, grounded in the principle of "depatriarchalise, demilitarise and defossilise." This requires confronting the root causes of violence, demanding transparency on military emissions, protecting environmental defenders and redirecting state resources toward justice, care and ecological protection.

Natalia highlighted the importance of regional and international instruments. The Escazú Agreement strengthens environmental democracy and protections for defenders. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Colombia has endorsed, offers a complementary pathway for accountability, public participation and transitions away from militarised extractivism.



Fossil Fuels, Occupation and Genocide in Palestine

Ana Sánchez, Global Energy
Embargo for Palestine



Ana Sánchez outlined the structural linkages between fossil fuels and Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestine. Israel's military operations, surveillance infrastructure and settlement expansion are heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels. Oil powers tanks, armoured vehicles, bulldozers and jet fuel; coal sustains the electricity grid for illegal settlements, weapons factories and surveillance systems; and natural gas exports bolster military capabilities and entrench apartheid structures.

Ana who works for the [Global Energy Embargo for Palestine](#) argued that "Israel's colonial, genocidal and apartheid regime heavily relies on external energy support to maintain its operations." This dependency underlies Palestinian civil society's call for a total energy embargo as a means of disrupting the flows that make military assaults possible. Energy embargoes, she noted, are non-violent interventions rooted in international law and long-standing trade union solidarity.

She highlighted that energy embargoes played significant roles in anti-colonial struggles across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, where they helped weaken oppressive regimes and support liberation movements. Today, an energy embargo offers a concrete mechanism to halt genocide, constrain military aggression and advance a just peace.

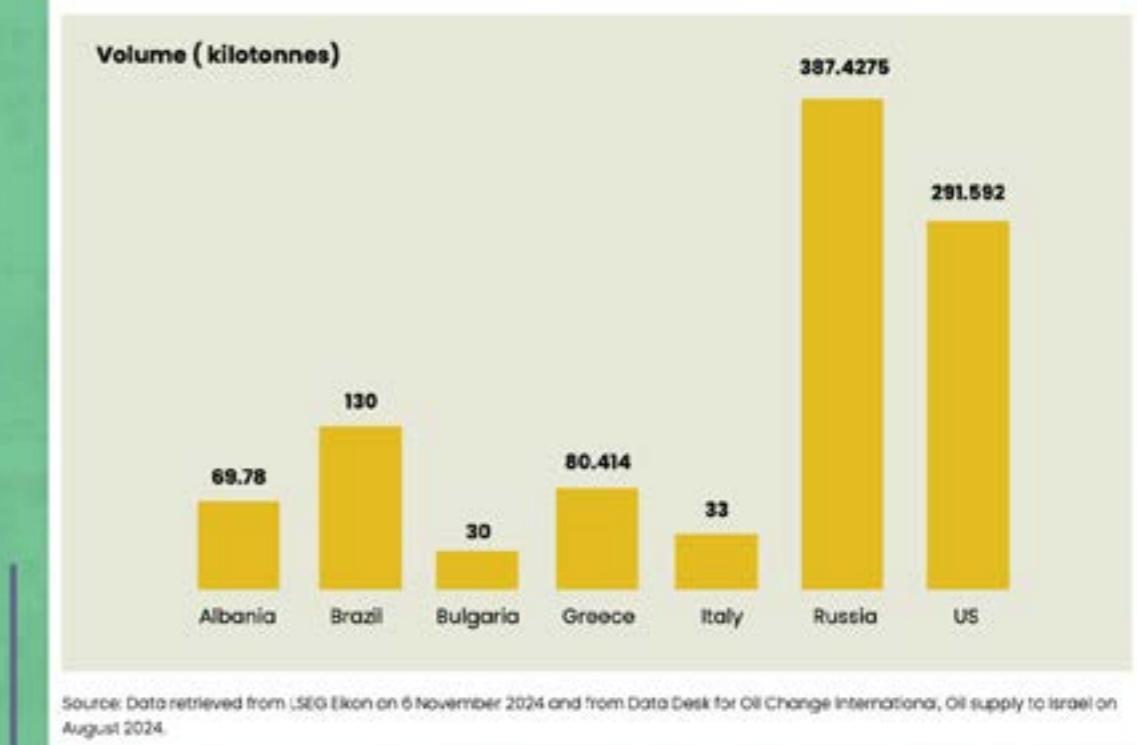


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Main Countries Israel imported fuel from since Sept 2023



Credit: soma.nl/powering-injustice/

Militarised Extractivism and Community Struggles in the Philippines

Ana Celestial, Coordinator, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment



Ana Celestial described the Philippines as a major epicentre of militarised extractivism in Asia and the Pacific. Extractive industries account for at least one-third of global environmental conflicts, and in the Philippines, mining, logging, agribusiness, hydropower and transition mineral projects rely on state and non-state armed actors.

She noted that militarisation justifies violent land acquisitions. Across the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar and the Pacific, communities that resist extraction face surveillance, intimidation, violent raids, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. "Military and police guard extraction sites, crack down on dissent and enforce displacement," she said, creating conditions in which extraction operates through coercion rather than consent.

The Philippines remains the deadliest country in Asia for environmental defenders. Since 2022, Kalikasan has documented 120 killings, 92 fabricated charges filed against defenders, often under anti-terror legislation, and at least 36 enforced disappearances, all with state forces implicated.

“Military and police guard extraction sites, crack down on dissent and enforce displacement”

Militarised extraction zones also heighten gender-based violence. Women and LGBTQ+ activists face harassment, threats and sexual violence. Indigenous women and youth experience

school raids, arrests of leaders and repeated displacement. Ana stressed that these forms of violence are rooted in colonial histories, capitalist extraction and patriarchal norms that punish communities for defending their lands.

She emphasised that extractivism "relies on violence, not consent," replacing free, prior and informed consent with militarised coercion. Despite systemic repression, community resistance including by [Kalikasan, the People's Network for the Environment](#) remains strong, including people's barricades, women's peace walks and the reoccupation of ancestral lands. "The most marginalised are the fiercest protectors of this planet," she concluded.



Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Power and Climate Justice

Selina Leem, Poet and Climate Advocate, Marshall Islands;
Karen Hallows, International Coordinator, Peace Boat



[Peace Boat](#) has worked for decades on nuclear abolition and environmental justice. Through its Global Voyage for a Nuclear-Free World, the organisation has brought more than one hundred Hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki around the world to share testimonies about the humanitarian, ecological and intergenerational impacts of nuclear weapons. Peace Boat has also visited Pacific communities affected by nuclear testing and climate change.

Building on its Hibakusha programme, Peace Boat launched the Ocean and Climate Youth Ambassador Programme, which brings young people from small island states onboard the ship to share the lived impacts of climate change on their communities. Marshallese poet and climate advocate Selina Leem participated in this programme and delivered a powerful spoken-word performance, "Just a Blue Passport," highlighting the intersections of nuclear testing and climate breakdown in the Marshall Islands. She described rising sea levels, cultural loss and radioactive contamination as intertwined existential threats.



Watch the Video of Selina Leem here: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/363081817>

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As sea levels rise, cracks in the Runit Dome threaten to release radioactive material into the ocean, providing a stark example of the convergence of nuclear injustice and climate risk.

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Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, releasing radioactive fallout across vast areas, causing long-term health impacts and displacing entire communities. The Runit Dome on Enewetak Atoll contains more than 85,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste. As sea levels rise, cracks in the Runit Dome threaten to release radioactive

material into the ocean, providing a stark example of the convergence of nuclear injustice and climate risk.

Nuclear weapons also pose grave global climate risks. Even a limited nuclear exchange involving two percent of the global arsenal could trigger a nuclear winter, collapse food systems and endanger billions of lives. Nuclear power, increasingly promoted in UNFCCC spaces, remains intrinsically tied to militarism: nuclear weapons and nuclear energy share uranium mining, enrichment and waste systems that disproportionately impact Indigenous and frontline communities.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 2021, provides a justice-centred framework grounded in survivor assistance, environmental remediation and disarmament. Its approach aligns closely with that of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. Both treaties aim to dismantle global systems that threaten planetary survival and address historical harms through justice-based transitions

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Conclusion:

Peace as the Foundation of Climate Action

The event demonstrated that militarism is not a side issue but a central driver of climate breakdown. Military emissions remain largely unreported and unaccounted for, directly undermining the Paris Agreement, while rising military spending diverts resources away from urgently needed climate action. Militarised extractivism continues to devastate ecosystems and communities, and fossil fuel dependency fuels conflict, occupation and violence. At the same time, nuclear weapons and nuclear power heighten global risk in an increasingly unstable climate.

Demilitarisation is therefore essential for credible and effective climate action. Redirecting even a portion of global military spending toward climate mitigation, adaptation and reparations would significantly strengthen the global response to the climate crisis. Addressing military emissions, reducing arms production and challenging the role of militaries in protecting extractive industries are necessary steps to close the gap between climate ambition and reality.

The discussions also highlighted that feminist, community-led and anti-militarist approaches offer practical and transformative pathways forward. By centring care, cooperation and justice, and by elevating the leadership of Indigenous peoples, women, youth and frontline communities, these approaches address the root causes of both climate breakdown and conflict. Disarming the climate crisis therefore requires political courage, international cooperation and a fundamental shift in priorities away from militarism and toward a future grounded in peace, justice and planetary survival.

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