

**Forum:** Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

**Issue:** Enhancing transparency in the military expenditure of UN Member States by adding to the UN Register of Conventional Arms

**Student Officer:** Marialena Sarimvei

**Position:** Co-Chair

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## Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to this year's session of the ACGMUN and specifically to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1). My name is Marialena Sarimvei and I am a 15 year old student, attending the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Pierce – The American College of Greece. It is my utmost honor to serve as one of your Co-Chairs and I cannot wait to meet all of you this March.

My MUN career began when I attended an online conference a few years ago. Yet, it formally started last year, when I joined my school's MUN club. Since then, I have had the opportunity of gaining a deeper understanding of international relations and diplomacy whilst developing critical thinking, debate and public speaking skills as well as making timeless memories.

This guide will provide you with vital information and facts regarding the issue of: “Enhancing transparency in the military expenditure of UN Member States by adding to the UN Register of Conventional Arms”, which is going to be debated during the conference. Seeing as this is a complex topic, I strongly encourage you to conduct your own research aside from this guide in order to better understand your country's policy and stance on the topic. In addition, it is advised that you prepare a few clauses to add to this resolution during lobbying.

If you have any questions regarding the topic, the study guide or the conference as a whole, seeing that I am also a member of the Organizing Team, don't hesitate to contact me via email at: [mariaelenisarimvei@gmail.com](mailto:mariaelenisarimvei@gmail.com) .

Kind regards,

Marialena Sarimvei.

## Topic Introduction

Military expenditure or military spending is the budgeted amount of money that is to be spent on a country's military forces. One of the most important parts of the military expenditure project is to study and enhance its transparency which is a critical issue for international security. One of the most efficient ways for a member state to provide transparency is through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). The 46/34 L General Assembly resolution established the UNROCA in order to provide means for transparency in any armaments by the United Nations member states. Through the UNROCA instrument, member states are requested, on an annual basis, to report their international transfers of seven categories major conventional arms, as well as small arms and light weapons. Upon it, every member state is asked to provide data to the Register regarding the transfers of the previous calendar year for seven categories. Specifically, Category I in regards of battle tanks, Category II in regards of armored combat vehicles, Category III in regards of large-calibre artillery, Category IV in regards of Combat Aircraft and Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV), Category V in regards of attack helicopters and rotary-wing UCAV, Category VI in regards of warships and Category VII in regards of missiles and missile launchers<sup>1</sup>

Transparency in military expenditure has a crucial role for the international level as well. This occurs because the global exchange of military information allows states to provide information regarding their national security through military measures and postures. Additionally, member states achieve understanding and trust, reduce misalignment, and lower the risk of armed conflict and war. It can be characterized as a machine that builds trust within nations and the inter-community.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Transparency

Transparency is the quality of being easily seen through, while transparency in a business or governance context refers to being open and honest. As part of corporate governance practices, it requires disclosure of all relevant information so that others can make informed decisions. This topic uses transparency to allow the United Nations' member states to know each other's spending.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN Register of Conventional Arms – UNODA. [disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/register/](https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/register/).

<sup>2</sup> Terrell Hanna, Katie , and Ivy Wigmore. "What Is Transparency and Why Is It Important? – TechTarget Definition." *WhatIs.com*, [www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/transparency](https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/transparency).

## Conventional arms

Conventional arms are weapons that cannot be classified as weapons of mass destruction. They are the most used weapons in conflict and crime settings and encompass a wide range of equipment, including battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft and UCAV.<sup>3</sup>

## Disarmament

‘Disarmament’ is the usual term to denote the elimination, as well as the limitation or reduction, through negotiations and subsequent international agreement, of the means by which nations wage war. Since the end of the Cold War, disarmament and ‘arms control’ have been used interchangeably.<sup>4</sup> The main part of the topic concerns disarmament and international security which are linked, since security is the biggest priority of this committee.

## Armed conflict

“An armed conflict is said to exist when there is an armed confrontation between the armed forces of States (international armed conflict), or between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State (non-international armed conflict). Other situations of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions are not considered to be armed conflicts.”<sup>5</sup>

## Sovereignty

“Sovereignty, in political theory, the ultimate overseer, or authority, in the decision-making process of the state and in the maintenance of order. The concept of sovereignty – one of the most controversial ideas in political science and international law – is closely related to the difficult concepts of state and government and of independence and democracy.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Conventional Arms – UNODA*. [disarmament.unoda.org/conventional-arms/](https://disarmament.unoda.org/conventional-arms/).

<sup>4</sup> “Disarmament in International Law.” *Obo*, [www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199796953/obo-9780199796953-0204.xml](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199796953/obo-9780199796953-0204.xml).

<sup>5</sup> Clapp, Sebastian. *AT a GLANCE*. 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Britannica. “Sovereignty | Politics.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 June 2014, [www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty](https://www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty).

## Expenditure

“An expenditure represents a payment with either cash or credit to purchase goods or services. It is recorded at a single point in time (the time of purchase), compared to an expense that is recorded in a period where it has been used up or expired.”<sup>7</sup>

## Proliferation

In foreign policy, “proliferation” most commonly refers to the spread or increase of nuclear weapons, and, sometimes, other destructive military technologies and systems. “Nonproliferation refers to the tools and policies used to mitigate that spread.”<sup>8</sup>

## Background Information

### The Military Expenditure

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, when defining armed forces, it is needed to include peacekeeping organizations, defence ministries and other governmental agencies engaged in defence projects. Specifically, aligned with SIPRI the global military spending has been rising steadily for several decades and includes both powerful nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom but also emerging economies such as India and Japan. On those, military and paramilitary forces when judged to be trained are equipped and available for military operations and space activities. So, the military expenditure or military budgets is the number of financial sources dedicated by a state to raise

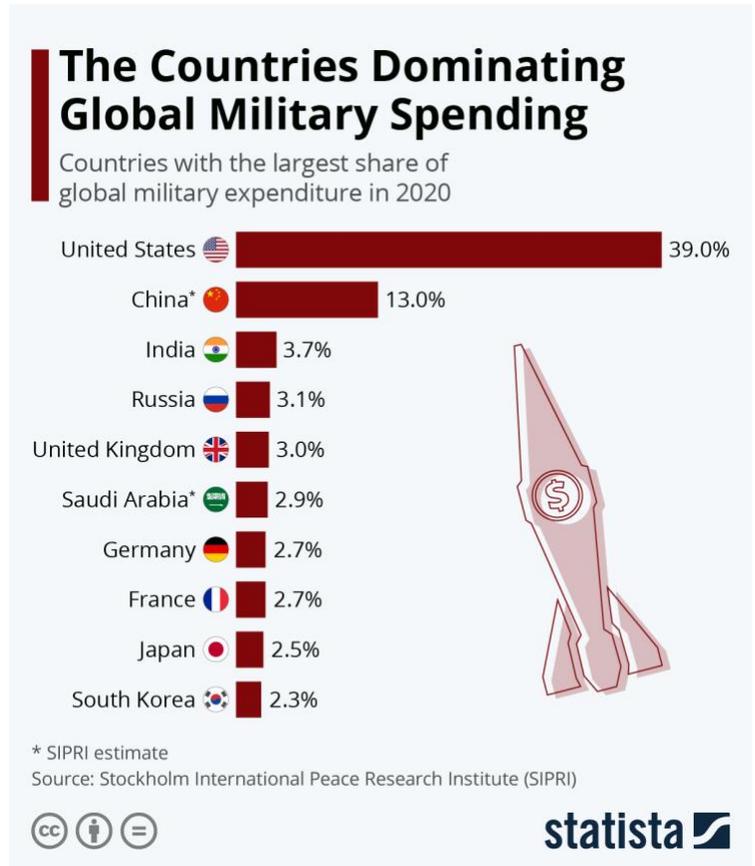


Figure 1: Global Arms Trade and Military Spending Infographic

<sup>7</sup> CFI team. “Expenditure.” *Corporate Finance Institute*, [corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/accounting/expenditure/](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/accounting/expenditure/).

<sup>8</sup> “What Is Nuclear Proliferation?” *CFR Education from the Council on Foreign Relations*, [education.cfr.org/learn/video/what-nuclear-proliferation](https://education.cfr.org/learn/video/what-nuclear-proliferation).

their armed forces or other methods essential for defense proposes. The military expenditure of the world in 2023 alone was 2.44 trillion US dollars<sup>9</sup>.

From a global perspective, transparency plays a critical role in shaping international relations, national security, and economic priorities. More specifically, it provides trust and confidence among states by sharing clear and accessible data on military expenditure, while reducing the risks of armed races and conflicts. More concerns are raised in the national security sectors, since there are many opportunities for the data to get to people that could potentially misuse them. Though transparency encourages responsible planning for defence systems and strengthens stability by ensuring that military budgets align with security and disarmament needs, rather than political or personal agendas. Economically, it promotes efficiency in military spending, since it redirects resources away from unnecessary arms accumulation toward social and developmental priorities, while increasing confidence in investor confidence and accessing international aid. As a result, the UN Register contributes to global peace, economic stability, and cooperative governance, ensuring that military expenditures are justified, accountable, and aligned with broader human development goals.

## **Challenges to Transparency**

### **Political Resistance and Concerns over Sovereignty**

Political resistance and military concern over sovereignty continue to be barriers to improving transparency in military expenditure. Initially political resistance occurs due to mistrust in the governmental sector and the risk of sensitive data becoming publicly available for conflicting nations, thus proving unfortunate opportunities to proceed to armed conflict or war. Concerns over sovereignty are connected to the fact that a country may lose its authority and power due to an increased military serving, with costs that should not be on that sector. Governments usually need to balance the advantages of the collaboration between the International community in order to ensure national security and political control. In addition, achieving a balance between transparency and national interest is a key factor which demands practical solutions that honor sovereignty and reach global trust. Voluntary initiatives, gradual implementation, and strengthened national oversight can help mitigate these challenges and improve the transparency of military spending.

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<sup>9</sup> Dyvik, Einar. "Ranking: Military Spending by Country 2017 | Statistic." *Statista*, Statista, 2024, [www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/).

### **Confidentiality and Competitive Advantages**

Confidentiality and competitive advantages are key considerations that often provide greater transparency in military spending. Governments and defense organizations often hesitate to disclose very detailed military spending due to concerns over their national security and any vulnerabilities in their strategies. For many states, it is important for them to not reveal any information about military expenditures, since there is a risk of exposing sensitive data regarding defense capabilities and technological advancements that could potentially give conflicting nations insights into a country's weaknesses. This could have major consequences such as escalation in arms races and numerous conflicts. In addition, the disclosure of specific spending patterns could showcase internal political stability or that military spending does not match the numbers that it should. Moreover, some countries have confidential agreements with military alliances, limiting the amount of information they are able to disclose. As a result, while transparency in military expenditure is important for global accountability, there is always the fear of compromising national security, provoking strategic missteps, or damaging political reputations, leading governments to have a reluctant perspective when sharing data and reports. The need to protect military capabilities and keep a competitive stance in defense technologies further complicates the push for a transparent future. Situations like this arise since countries may be seen as more vulnerable and being targeted over nations that withhold much greater power and rushing into armed conflicts. Moreover, governments need transparency with the protection of sensitive information which often requires designed frameworks that allow for greater accountability without compromising the security or competitive advantage.

### **Potential of the Misuse of the data**

The potential for misuse of data is another significant concern in the push for greater transparency in military expenditure. In the reports that need to be given, sensitive and financial and specific strategic information that could endanger the whole nation's military forces. It's very important to note that such data could be misinterpreted and misinformation could lead to other nations not understanding their own strategies.

### **National Priorities and Economic Constraints**

National priorities and economic constraints have a significant role in limiting the extent of transparency in military spending. Governments must balance military expenditures with other pressing national needs which create tension between defense spending and responsibility. At times of

economic hardship or budgetary constraints, governments may prioritize secrecy over transparency to maintain flexibility in their defense strategies or to avoid public scrutiny of defense budgets that could affect political support. Additionally, military spending decisions are based and influenced by strategic priorities and by national needs, which may not align with calls for engaging in a more transparent tomorrow.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Nigeria

Nigeria's drive to enhance transparency in military expenditure and arms trade and particularly regarding the country's participation in UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and other international transparency mechanisms, speaks to both the ambition and the challenges Nigeria faces in ensuring accountability in the defence sector. Internal and external pressures as well as Nigeria's military presence in Africa, as well as in the African Union and history of instability and violence shaped the country's military transparency approach. Nigeria is mostly in favour of the transparency in the expenditure and focuses on their commitment to the international norms and peace. However, they are still concerned with national security and regional dynamics. Concerns arose due to security challenges such as security threats and violence, strategic autonomy after being transparent and negotiation leverage for the future.

### Russian Federation

From the early 2000s, Russia has made a few efforts towards a more transparent budget system compared to its Soviet predecessor. However, significant portions of military expenditures remain classified, leading to uncertainty about actual spending levels. Reports indicate that secret expenditures increased from approximately 10% to 20% of total federal expenditures between 2011 and 2016, and even higher percentages within defense-related budgets<sup>10</sup>. Recently, the United Nations' meeting with the Russian Federation has shown the need for new, transparent, mechanisms and policies which will improve the country's military spending in a global manner. While they are open to transparency, they remain concerned in regard to their nation's sovereignty and so the effectiveness of the calls to assert higher national standards, remains up to Russia's discretion.

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<sup>10</sup> "Defence Expenditures, Secrecy and State Programmes in the Russian Federal Budget: A Closer Look at the Data - Sceeus." *Sceeus*, 12 June 2024, [sceeus.se/en/publications/defence-expenditures-secrecy-and-state-programmes-in-the-russian-federal-budget-a-closer-look-at-the-data/](https://sceeus.se/en/publications/defence-expenditures-secrecy-and-state-programmes-in-the-russian-federal-budget-a-closer-look-at-the-data/). Accessed 17 Dec. 2024.

## **United States of America (USA)**

The USA plays an important role in the sales of global arms and military spending, domestically and internationally. For the past two decades, the USA has made a series of specific efforts to enhance transparency in the military sector although they had initial concerns regarding the potential of the measures since they might defeat their national security and sovereignty. The Financial Improvement and Audit Remediation (FIAR), a significant project in 2009, is a remediation plan that has an opportunity in place to allow an auditor – a person authorised to confirm the accuracy of financial records and make sure they comply with tax laws – to scope and carry out a full financial statement audit that results in actionable feedback<sup>11</sup>. Another effort is the establishment of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which is a non-governmental organisation that monitors all national defence spending.

## **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (SIPRI)**

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is a key organization that researches conflict armaments and arms control<sup>12</sup>. Established by the Swedish parliament in 1966, SIPRI collects and presents data and analysis regarding the disarmaments to persuade research policy makers to promote a world that will resolve conflicts and maintain peace. The SIPRI conducts scientific research aimed at understanding the conditions necessary for sustainable peace and the resolution of international conflicts. Its research covers military expenditure, arms trade, disarmament, and security issues. The main objective of the institute provides policymakers, researchers, and the public with data, analysis, and recommendations based on open-source information. This includes comprehensive reports on global military expenditures and arms transfers.

## **United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNODA)**

Created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1952, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNODA) and under the Security Council is ready to prepare proposals for a treaty for the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments, including the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Although established in 1952, the meeting began after 1959 and happened occasionally. In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted

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<sup>11</sup> “Financial Improvement and Audit Remediation (FIAR) for Product Support | Wwww.dau.edu.” *Dau.edu*, 2024, [www.dau.edu/acquikipedia-article/financial-improvement-and-audit-remediation-fiar-product-support](http://www.dau.edu/acquikipedia-article/financial-improvement-and-audit-remediation-fiar-product-support). Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

<sup>12</sup> SIPRI. “Home | SIPRI.” *Sipri.org*, 2018, [www.sipri.org/](http://www.sipri.org/).

to disarmament established a successor Disarmament Commission as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, composed of all Member States of the United Nations. It was created as a deliberative body, with the function of considering and making recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament and of following up on the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session. It reports annually to the General Assembly<sup>13</sup>.

## **Blocs Expected**

### **Alliance 1**

Countries in Favor of Transparency. Countries that support the addition of the expenditure data to be added to the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and who are mostly prioritizing diplomacy, peace and stability for their nation. The Register prevents conflict and restricts any actions that might be taken to cause it, such as ban or/and regulate the use of weapons. In addition, countries that are not in favour of arms trade help the register capture most of the trades. In this alliance countries that agree with the policies of the following P5 Member States would be added: France, United States of America and the United Kingdom. Among them, countries such as Sweden, Norway and Japan belong in this alliance.

### **Alliance 2**

Countries Against Transparency. Countries that oppose the addition of the military expenditure data to the United States Register of Conventional Arms who are concerned with their national security, sovereignty and the misuse of their information. The countries that want to lower their corruption risks, and most importantly those that don't agree with publishing their military information due to the risks mentioned. The P5 members of this alliance would be Russia and China. Countries such as India, Egypt, Türkiye and Iran would also be added here.

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<sup>13</sup> *United Nations Disarmament Commission – UNODA*. [disarmament.unoda.org/institutions/disarmament-commission/](https://disarmament.unoda.org/institutions/disarmament-commission/).

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
December 1991	The UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) was established by the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
1999	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank implemented the Public Financial Management (PFM) framework, which includes improving transparency in the military expenditure and defense budget as part of a broader scale in transparency reforms.
2013	The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) called for the development of a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).
April 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2013	The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
October 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	The World Bank and IMF jointly initiated the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).
November 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the Fiscal Transparency Code, which provides guidelines for reporting the budget.
September 2016	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by most member states.

## Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

- [Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030](#)
- [United Nations Standardized Reporting Procedure on Expenditure](#)
- [SIPRI](#)
- [United Nations General Assembly Resolution. A/RES/72/73 \(2017\)](#)
- [United Nations General Assembly Resolution. A/RES/70/43 \(2015\)](#)
- [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#)

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### UN General Assembly Resolution 46/36 L

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/36 L was adopted on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1991, which called for the establishment of the UN Register of Conventional Arms in order to enhance

transparency in global arms transfers and reduce the risks of conflict. The Register is a voluntary mechanism through which states are encouraged to report on their imports, exports, holdings, and production of specific categories of conventional arms, such as the ones mentioned in the topic introduction. The main goal is to promote confidence and trust between nations in order to prevent arms races, and minimize the destabilizing effects of unchecked arms. While participation is not mandatory, over the course of time, many countries have provided the data needed to the Register, making it an important tool in arms control and disarmament efforts, for all the member states. By making this information publicly available, the Register monitors trends in arms transfers and military buildups, which contributes to the overall international peace and security. However, challenges remain, including limited participation by the member states.



Figure 2: The decrease of the number of countries sharing the reports to the UN Register of Conventional Arms

### International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) was established in 1958, and it is leading a global research institution based in London, with offices in different countries such as in Singapore, Bahrain, and Washington. The IISS has a focus on analyzing and providing expert insights into international security, defense, and strategic issues, including military capabilities, arms control, and geopolitical dynamics. It is best known for its influential publications, such as *The Military Balance*, an annual report on the defense opportunities and expenditures of over 170 member states, and *Survival*, another bimonthly journal that covers a range of strategic topics. The IISS also hosts major conferences, including the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, which gathered most of the defense

ministers, military leaders, and experts discussing security issues of the Asia-Pacific. Through comprehensive research, publications, and events, the IISS withholds a very important role in establishing global debates to promote security and helping policymakers create different defense and strategic challenges.

### **International Arms Transparency Institute**

The Transparency International Defence & Security (TI-DS) is a part of Transparency International, which is one of the world's biggest leading anti-corruption movements, with 100 national Chapters and a Secretariat in Berlin. TI-DS is a global centre of excellence, evidence and advocacy dedicated to building integrity in the defence and security sector for the benefit of citizens, states, and the world. It is hosted by Transparency International UK and works with Chapters across the Movement<sup>14</sup>. Since its establishment, the TI-DS has worked on promoting anti-corruption policies into the global defence and international security agenda. One of the biggest successes of the TI-DS has been the establishment of the Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI), which alongside the TI-DS is the world's leading assessment of corruption risk in national defence institutions. In the most recent strategy that they provided, the 2021-2023 report, a key research index used was the GDI which influenced defence institutions and informed the member states regarding policy positions on topics including Security Sector Reform (SSR), arms control, and private military sector integrity. They have created networks that influence partnerships between Chapters and Civil Society Organisations, while forming global policies in advocating better defence policies promoting international security and disarmament.

## **Possible Solutions**

### **Mandatory and voluntary reporting mechanisms**

By placing two types of mechanisms, member states will have to agree and set in place at least of them. Mandatory reporting mechanisms will require governments to provide information upon their military expenditure and arms trade as a part of a national legal obligation that they will have to give. These reports are going to be monitored and overlooked by the Register and as a result mandate transparency in the military budgets. On the other hand, voluntary mechanisms are not legally required but are highly encouraged by the community so all countries can be aware of the actions that will be

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<sup>14</sup> "International Institute for Strategic Studies." IISS, 2019, [www.iiss.org/](http://www.iiss.org/).

made in a transparent member state. In addition, those that participate in these voluntary mechanisms would do so in the interest of promoting greater transparency, building trust, or fulfilling international norms and laws.

### **Initiatives in transparency**

Most of the member states have some measures in place to ensure that they have a strong framework in order to protect their national or military sovereignty. These initiatives include a process of recognising countries that withhold leadership roles in the international community upon military positions, who have already been open to transparency and once publicly recognised by the United Nations Member states should pursue the same path. In addition, less economically developed countries (LEDCs) should be given economical and financial assistance in order to begin participating in the reports. These initiatives will not only help in creating a more accountable defense sector but will also contribute to broader goals of peace, security, and sustainable development by ensuring that defense spending does not come at the expense of social services and long-term development objectives.

### **International Cooperation**

On the issue of enhancing military expenditure, the international community and, specifically, communication upon it plays a crucial role. For the system to work effectively, international cooperation is key. Member States will most likely engage in such transparency frameworks when they see and understand that their security interests are aligned with those of the rest of the countries. When a number of states understand that reporting is a mutual benefit for all, other states will contribute to sharing collectively their security data which will allow them to reduce the risk of armed conflict between nations. Strengthening international cooperation in military expenditure transparency requires a multilateral approach which includes diplomatic efforts, the involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations such as SIPRI and/or the Arms Control Association, better reporting frameworks, and incentives for states. Taking into consideration the above, these actions will create an environment where transparency is seen as not only a beneficial but essential part of global peace and security while also embracing the UN Register of Conventional Arms to be transparent. This would result in a more stable international system with a better managed military spending and more aligned with the broader goals of international disarmament, conflict prevention, and security.

## **Creation of International Database**

Acknowledging the fact that the international community has a major role in transparency, the establishment of an open-source database, monitored by the UN Register of Conventional Arms, will allow officials to access all military expenditure data that a member state chooses to provide. This platform would allow all specialised individuals and governments to contribute and access the information. This database would be updated every six to eight months, ensuring accurate data for the international experts or NGOs to have correct and exact data for their research. These changes would be automatic by using blockchain technology, which would distribute the records in a more secure and transparent way. The platform would foster collaboration, transparency and accountability in the global data, while encouraging governments to be more consistent with their reporting and updating their reporting mechanisms.

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