

SUBMISSION TO THE UNFCCC GLOBAL STOCKTAKE: MILITARY AND CONFLICT EMISSIONS

SUMMARY

Militaries are huge fossil fuel consumers and have large and complex supply chains, yet only a few States provide disaggregated fuel use data to the UNFCCC. Data is poor, but estimates suggest the world's militaries are responsible for 5.5% of global GHG emissions. This estimate excludes emissions from warfighting itself.

The Global Stocktake must recognise the data gaps and uncertainty regarding military and conflict emissions, and the requirement for revisions in the UNFCCC reporting framework and reporting obligations to ensure greater transparency and scrutiny.

Please contact deborah@tippingpointnorthsouth.org for any queries on this joint submission.

KEY MESSAGES

- Reporting disaggregated military fuel use data to the UNFCCC is voluntary and inconsistent across States.
- Data gaps on military and conflict GHG emissions compromise the GST 2023 assessment and an understanding of where these contributions sit.
- Effective reporting of military emissions through UNFCCC processes would help ensure IPCC modelling of temperature rises are more accurate.
- With global military expenditure at around \$2 trillion each year and rising, military emissions are also very likely to increase.
- Military and conflict emissions must be better addressed within the UNFCCC framework.

INTRODUCTION

Please find this submission on the serious concern shared by researchers and civil society organisations on the voluntary nature of (significant) military emissions reporting, the partial and patchy data that is available as a result and, consequently, the insufficient scientific, societal and environmental impact assessment that accrues. This submission makes the case for this 'missing piece' to be urgently addressed within the global stocktake (GST).

While civil society has begun to request that the many relevant bodies within the UNFCCC process demand full, transparent and compulsory reporting of military emissions, we are grateful for this opportunity to bring this issue to the GST process. We were also able to bring this issue to the attention of Ms Njega, at the close of the High-Level Panel on the GST at Sharm El-Sheikh and were very grateful for her time and the concern she expressed about this being missing from GST process.

It is clear that this military emissions gap¹ can only result in compromising the GST 2023 assessment.

Estimates on available data put global military emissions at 5.5%.² This includes the significant emissions of the military technology industry and the associated supply chains, without which militaries cannot function. Militaries remain intensively fossil fuel reliant and their emissions correlate to their (ever rising) military budgets, currently running at an annual \$2 trillion,³ which are rising again due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Specifically, the G20 nations alone account for 87% of all military spending.

MILITARY EMISSIONS AND MITIGATION

The 5.5% of global GHG emissions – some 2,750 tCO₂e – that has been estimated for the carbon footprint of the world's militaries and associated military technology industry does not include conflict-related sources. These include emissions from infrastructure or landscape fires, the degradation of carbon sinks, post-conflict reconstruction and healthcare for victims.⁴

Yet in spite of these omissions, this contribution is comparable to that of other sectors such as civilian aviation (2%)⁵ and civilian shipping (3%)⁶. Despite this enormous climate impact, there is an unacceptable lack of transparency and accountability for this particular sector. For various reasons, including national self-interest and confidentiality, many national governments have consistently ensured that this aspect of their emissions is not addressed in our collective struggle against climate breakdown.⁷ Analysis of the most recent data provided to the UNFCCC from the top 60 Annex I and non-Annex I countries by military expenditure reveals that reporting continues to be of a poor quality, incomplete and opaque.⁸

This military emissions gap – the historic exclusion of comprehensive military reporting from the UNFCCC process – has a range of implications. These include the omission of military data from leading emissions tracking products and,⁹ until recently, a lack of scrutiny and pressure on militaries to decarbonise.¹⁰

CONFLICTS AS A SOURCE OF EMISSIONS

On top of the GHG emissions from militaries' daily activities, vehicles, ships, jets, estates and operations, the climate impact of conflict and war cannot be ignored. There has not been a year in modern history that the world has remained conflict-free. Despite this there has been very limited study to date on the immediate and long-term climate impact of a war.^{11,12,13,14}

¹ <https://militaryemissions.org>

² <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/estimating-military-s-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

³ <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2021>

⁴ <https://ceobs.org/report-a-framework-for-military-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reporting>

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions-from-aviation>

⁶ <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0665>

⁷ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-and-conflict-related-emissions-report>

⁸ <https://militaryemissions.org>

⁹ <https://ceobs.org/climate-trackers-join-us-in-shining-the-spotlight-on-militaries>

¹⁰ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03444-7>

¹¹ <https://priceofoil.org/2008/03/01/a-climate-of-war>

¹² <https://transformdefence.org/publication/indefensible>

¹³ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-and-conflict-related-emissions-report>

¹⁴ <https://climatefocus.com/publications/climate-damage-caused-by-russias-war-in-ukraine>

The destruction during wars of natural or man-made carbon stocks such as forests, energy infrastructure and oil wells can reach hundreds of millions tCO₂e. The burning and reconstruction of cities during and after a country-wide conflict can readily release emissions on a similar scale.¹⁵ The invasion of Iraq by the United States-led coalition was estimated to have released around 250 million tCO₂e.^{16,17} The war-related activities by the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria were estimated to be responsible for 440 million tCO₂e between 2001 and 2018.¹⁸

More recently, just the first seven months of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been estimated to be responsible for at least 100 million tCO₂e.¹⁹ For comparison, Ukraine's total CO₂ emissions in 2021 (prior to the invasion in 2022) was 185 million tonnes.²⁰ Conflict-related emissions are substantial, even before we take account of the human suffering and the long-term environmental degradation and pollution.

The possibility of keeping global temperature change below 1.5°C is rapidly receding, with current modelling indicating we are on track for about 2.7°C heating.²¹ At this late stage, every single effort to reduce emissions matters and this is especially true when it relates to such a major sectoral emitter, and a source – conflicts – whose emissions dynamics have historically been ignored.

Effective reporting of military emissions through UNFCCC processes would also help ensure IPCC modelling of temperature rises are more accurate, since they too face restrictions on requesting sufficient emissions information.

We hope this submission will make clear the relevance of military and conflict emissions for the first Global Stocktake finalised for COP28 and carried forward into subsequent Global Stocktakes.

Our climate emergency can no longer afford to permit the 'business as usual' omission of military and conflict-related emissions within the UNFCCC process and international climate negotiations. By including both, the first GST will be making an invaluable contribution to achieving full accountability on this issue. The signatories of this joint submission are willing to support the GST in this endeavour.

Submitted on behalf of:

Tiping Point North South / Transform Defence Project
Conflict and Environment Observatory
Scientists for Global Responsibility
Concrete Impacts
The Costs of War Project
The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Zoï Environment Network
Norwegian People's Aid

¹⁵ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/military-and-conflict-related-emissions-report>

¹⁶ <https://priceofoil.org/2008/03/01/a-climate-of-war>

¹⁷ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/indefensible>

¹⁸ <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/ClimateChangeandCostofWar>

¹⁹ <https://climatefocus.com/publications/climate-damage-caused-by-russias-war-in-ukraine>

²⁰ https://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/report_2022

²¹ <https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/massive-gas-expansion-risks-overtaking-positive-climate-policies/>

ABOUT



Tipping Point North South / Transform Defence Project

Tipping Point North South's primary policy and advocacy project is Transform Defence for Sustainable Human Safety, launched December 2020. It brings together all TPNS military-related work including redirection of military spending into funding for climate finance; calling for full and transparent military emissions accounting across relevant UN processes; making the case for *sustainable human safety* to be at the heart of fit-for-purpose 21st century foreign, defence, security and international development policy-making.



Conflict and Environment Observatory

Conflict and Environment Observatory

The Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS) works to ensure that the environmental consequences of armed conflicts and military activities are properly documented and addressed, and that those affected are assisted. It was launched in 2018 with the primary goal of increasing awareness and understanding of the environmental and derived humanitarian consequences of conflicts and military activities. It seeks to challenge the idea of the environment as a "silent victim of armed conflict."



Scientists for Global Responsibility

Scientists for Global Responsibility

Scientists for Global Responsibility promotes ethical science, design and technology, based on the principles of openness, accountability, peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability. It is an independent UK-based membership organisation of hundreds of natural scientists, social scientists, engineers, IT professionals and architects, supported by hundreds more outside of these professions. SGR carries out research, education, and advocacy work centred around the military, environmental and political aspects of science, design and technology and provides a support network for ethically-concerned professionals in these fields.



Concrete Impacts

Militaries around the world are a major source of pollution and carbon emissions, yet little is known about their environmental footprint. Concrete Impacts is a UKRI-Economic Social Research Council funded collaboration between Queen Mary, Lancaster and Durham Universities examining the socio-ecological effects of military supply chains and wider environmental damage.

The Costs of War Project

COSTS OF WAR

The Costs of War project is a team of over 50 scholars, legal experts, human rights practitioners, and physicians, which began its work in 2010. We use research and a public website to facilitate debate about the costs of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the related violence in Pakistan and Syria. There are many hidden or unacknowledged costs of the United States' decision to respond to the 9/11 attacks with military force. We aim to foster democratic discussion of these wars by providing the fullest possible account of their human, economic, and political costs, and to foster better informed public policies.



The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations (UN). Since its establishment in 1915, WILPF have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.



Zoï Environment Network

Zoï Environment Network is a Swiss non-profit organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, that provides environmental information services on analysis, policy dialogue, training and communication to governments, international organizations and NGOs.



Norwegian People's Aid

Norwegian People's Aid

Norwegian People's Aid is a politically independent membership-based organisation working in Norway and in more than 30 countries around the world. Founded in 1939 as the labour movement's humanitarian solidarity organisation, NPA aims to improve people's living conditions and to create a democratic, just and safe society. NPA's international work covers three core areas: Mine Action and disarmament, Development and Humanitarian relief aid.