



**Conflict and
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Observatory**

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The Belém Mission to 1.5°C

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About us

CEOBS is a UK charity which provides a voice for our environment - and those who depend upon it - when it faces harm from armed conflicts and military activities.¹ We work with a range of stakeholders to research and publicise environmental data, develop methodologies to improve data collection and analysis, and scrutinise and contribute to developments in law and policy intended to reduce the environmental harm caused by conflicts and military activities. CEOBS has been an UNFCCC observer organisation since COP28.

In collaboration with our academic partners at the universities of Durham, Lancaster, and Queen Mary University of London, we launched the Military Emissions Gap. Through this project, we have examined national reporting of military greenhouse gas emissions to the UNFCCC, making the reported data available in one place for the first time: www.militaryemissions.org.² Collating the data submitted by the top 60 countries by military expenditure has highlighted numerous gaps in what data is collected, and how it is reported.

CEOBS has studied the contribution that the military sector is making to the climate crisis since 2020 and is deeply concerned that rapid global increases in defence spending and activity are placing the goals of the Paris Agreement at risk. In this submission to the Belém Mission to 1.5°C, we will address the barriers to climate action presented by militarism, and outline evidence based solutions to address them.

¹ The Conflict and Environment Observatory: <https://ceobs.org>

² The Military Emissions Gap: <https://militaryemissions.org>

Barriers

Military emissions reporting, transparency and action gaps

Militaries are responsible for an estimated 5.5% of global emissions, meaning that if global militaries were a country, they would be the fourth largest emitter.³ Yet the sector is consistently missing from coordinated climate action and its emissions remain underreported to the UNFCCC. This is due to historic reporting exemption dating back to the Kyoto Protocol which has not yet been fully remedied, despite civil society pressure. As a result, military emissions data reported to the UNFCCC tends to be patchy, incomplete or missing altogether, with inconsistent reporting and aggregation of data between countries⁴.

This reporting gap permeates across the UNFCCC. In an analysis of NDCs set to be published ahead of COP31, CEOBS found that no Party has addressed the need to reduce the emissions from their militaries. This means that a large - and growing - source of emissions is not taken into account within plans to limit warming to 1.5°C. Global military spending has risen consecutively for the last 11 years to \$2.8 trillion in 2025, and each dollar of military spending has a carbon cost. Estimations of the climate impact of planned military spending increases across NATO and the EU alone suggest an additional emissions burden of up to 218 million tCO₂e, which could result in climate damages costing up to \$298 billion per year.⁵

While lower carbon technologies remain underdeveloped, militaries are committing to equipment which will lock them into fossil fuel consumption for decades to come, posing a problem for long-term emissions reduction. The absence of consideration of militaries as a source of emissions within the UNFCCC processes like national inventory reporting and NDCs creates challenges for accurately assessing progress towards Net Zero targets, as well as identifying effective mitigation opportunities.

Conflict as a barrier to adaptation and mitigation

Conflict can impede countries' mitigation and adaptation capabilities. Destruction of carbon sinks, energy systems, ecosystems and infrastructure during conflict reduces countries' mitigation potential and adaptation capacities.⁶

Our analysis of NDCs found that a number of countries acknowledged the impact of conflict on constraining climate action, citing damage to infrastructure, limits to mitigation ambition, and barriers to data, governance, and project implementation. We also found reference to the impact of conflicts on

³ Parkinson S, Cottrell L (2022). Estimating the Military's Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Scientists for Global Responsibility; Conflict and Environment Observatory.
https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating_Global_Military_GHG_Emissions_Nov22_rev.pdf

⁴ Kinney E., Weir D., Mackey B., de Klerk L. and Abolfathi S. (2025). Accounting for the uncounted: The global climate impact of military activities. Griffith Climate Action Beacon NZE Policy Briefing Note 2/25, <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/5854>

⁵ Joint paper (2025) How increasing global military expenditure threatens SDG 13 on Climate action.
<https://ceobs.org/how-increasing-global-military-expenditure-threatens-sdg-13-on-climate-action>

⁶ Kinney E., Weir D., Mackey B., de Klerk L. and Abolfathi S. (2025). Accounting for the uncounted: The global climate impact of military activities. Griffith Climate Action Beacon NZE Policy Briefing Note 2/25, <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/5854>

emissions; including direct emissions increases from warfighting as well as other impacts such as infrastructure damage, reconstruction, and disruption to other sectors.

The world is facing the highest level of conflict since WWII; as well as impeding climate action on a national level, conflict can also hamper multilateral negotiations and international collaboration. Recently, this has been witnessed within the UNFCCC where conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Israel's attacks on Gaza have all impacted COP planning and proceedings.

Solutions

Mandatory military emissions reporting

GHG emissions cannot be effectively managed without measuring them. Without even a minimum reporting obligation to the UNFCCC, most countries – including those with large military expenditures and numbers of personnel – do not require their militaries to provide any meaningful GHG emissions reporting.

Improving transparency of military greenhouse gas emissions reporting would allow for targeted mitigation action through strengthening the evidence base for national climate planning. Increased transparency is integral to providing more accurate assessments of progress towards the Paris Agreement and keeping 1.5°C within reach.

The Belém Mission to 1.5°C should consider implementing mandatory military emissions reporting within the UNFCCC, through national inventory reporting.

Inclusion of military emissions reduction targets within NDCs

Accounting for all key sources of emissions is essential to effective implementation of NDCs, and keeping 1.5°C within reach. As outlined above, militaries are a significant source of emissions; in the UK, the Ministry of Defence is responsible for over half of central government's emissions, and in the US, the Pentagon is the world's largest institutional user of fossil fuels. The IPCC has specified that we must reduce global GHG emissions by 43% by 2030 to limit warming to the 1.5°C target outlined in the 2015 Paris Agreement. No industry can be exempt from emissions reductions if we are to stay within this limit.

Several Parties have already begun to acknowledge the contribution of their militaries to global emissions and set out climate mitigation policy and strategies, including Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UAE.⁷ However, failure to integrate already existing military GHG mitigation plans into NDCs risks reduced external scrutiny and a reduced obligation by Parties to deliver. To show full commitment, provide transparency within the UNFCCC and encourage other States to follow, military GHG mitigation plans should be integrated into all new NDCs.

⁷ Scientists for Global Responsibility (2026) Military climate strategies: Are they just greenwash?
https://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-07/SGR_Military_Climate_Strategies_final.pdf

The Belém Mission to 1.5°C should address this gap within NDCs, and advocate for the inclusion of military emissions mitigation targets and strategies within future NDCs.

Addressing funding gaps

Following current trends, the world could be spending up to \$6.6 trillion on its militaries by 2035.⁸ As well as driving emissions higher, through increased military activity and military-industrial activity, recent years have seen Parties deprioritising climate action to fund increasing military spending. For example, last year the EU opened up its Just Transition Fund to allow member states to use funds previously earmarked for supporting the continent's neutrality goals, for defence capabilities instead. This is a trend that has been seen across Global North Parties.

Military spending is a climate issue and current levels are likely incompatible with keeping within the limit of 1.5°C. The Belém Mission to 1.5°C should address the funding imbalance between climate action and escalating militarism. Redirecting even a small share of military expenditure toward climate action would significantly expand the financial resources available to support renewable energy deployment, worker retraining, community-led economic diversification and environmental remediation of fossil fuel extraction sites.

Recommendations

To summarise, CEOBS recommends the following actions be considered within the Belém Mission to 1.5°C:

- Implementation of mandatory military emissions reporting within the UNFCCC, through national inventory reporting.
- Inclusion of military emissions mitigation targets and strategies within future NDCs.
- Addressing the imbalance between military spending and climate action

We thank the Presidencies for their work increasing ambition, and we are available for any follow up discussion on this topic.

⁸ United Nations (2025) The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future. <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/the-true-cost-of-peace>