

CLIMATE CRISIS

MILITARISM AND VIOLENCE



LaRutadelClima

Credits

Editorial ©La Ruta del Clima –

Analysis of Climate Change and Militarization by the Association La Ruta del Clima

ISBN: 978-9930-646-00-7

ISBN: 978-9930-646-00-7



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Editorial: La Ruta del Clima

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Published in San José, Costa Rica 1st edition, March 2025.

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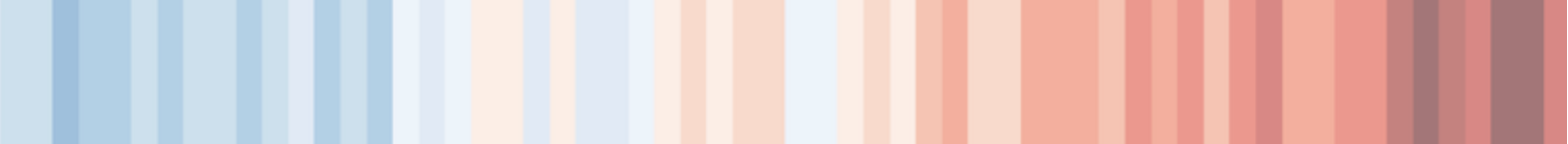
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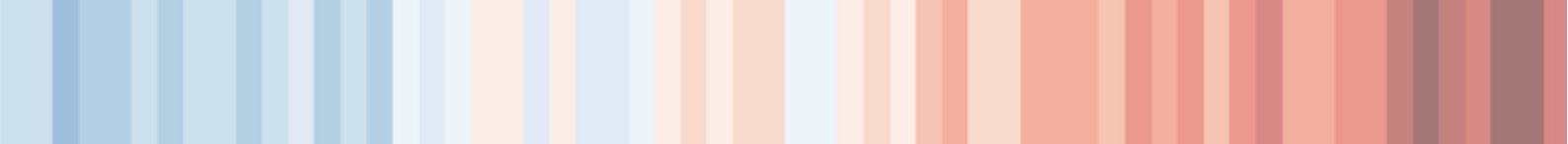
"The relations between social forces are essentially variable, and the underprivileged will always seek to alter them; it is wrong to enforce an artificial stabilization. What is required is discrimination between the imaginary and the real, so as to diminish the risks of war, without interfering with the struggle between forces which, according to Heraclitus, is the condition of life itself."

Simone Weil.



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Acronyms

COP: Conference of the Parties

DoD: U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)

EU: European Union

GHG: Greenhouse gases

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

MMTCO_{2e}: Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent

NCQG: New Quantified Collective Target on Climate Finance (NCQG)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

USA: United States of America

1. Climate change and militarization.

Global warming has continued unabated, and in recent years the acceleration of its impacts has become evident.¹ Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the leading cause of global warming and continue to increase year after year.

The socioeconomic, intergenerational and structural inequalities that differentiate developed countries from developing countries have led to an understanding of climate change as a human rights issue, a failed economic model and climate justice.²

Developed countries are primarily responsible for the climate crisis, however, their responsibility is not reflected adequately in climate finance or actions that should be consistent with the magnitude of the crisis. One of the biggest contradictions of global north policies in the face of the climate crisis is the growing militarization and violence even in a context of global climate emergency.

Some discouraging figures indicate that:

- If the armies of the whole world were a country, they would be close to being the 4th emitter of the GHG emissions ranking.³
- According to the report, "Climate Under Crossfire" NATO's military spending accounts for 5.5% of greenhouse gas emissions.⁴
- Military activities, despite being highly polluting, are not obliged to report their GHG emissions to the United Nations, because they were excluded in the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 due to pressure from the United States of America.
- In the 2015 Paris Agreement, its exclusion was eliminated, leaving this issue to the willingness of countries to report military emissions and their possible reduction at the discretion of each country.⁵

¹ "Calentamiento Global de 1,5 C" (https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/SR15_Summary_Volume_spanish.pdf, 2019) <www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/SR15_Summary_Volume_spanish.pdf> accedido el 25 de febrero de 2025

² "Climate change is a matter of justice: here's why | UNDP Climate Promise" (*UNDP Climate Promise*) <<https://climatepromise.undp.org/es/news-and-stories/el-cambio-climatico-es-un-asunto-de-justicia-he-aqui-por-que>> accessed 19 February 2025

³ "Increased military spending in NATO countries will generate an additional 467 million tonnes of CO₂ over eight years - Climática, the media specialized in climate and biodiversity" (*Climática, the media specialized in climate and biodiversity*) <<https://climatica.coop/aumento-gasto-militar-paises-otan-co2/>> accessed on February 19, 2025

⁴ "Report by the Transnational Institute, Stop Wapenhandel and Tipping Point, with the collaboration of the Centre Delàs: The climate under crossfire. How NATO's 2% military spending target contributes to climate breakdown" - Delàs" (*Delàs*) <<https://centredelas.org/publicacions/climatecrossfire/?lang=es>> accessed February 19, 2025

⁵ How does the military sector contribute to the environmental crisis? - Delàs" (*Delàs*) <<https://centredelas.org/actualitat/como-contribuye-el-sector-militar-a-la-crisis-medioambiental/#:~:text=del%20sector%20armamentistico-,Un%20estudio%20de%2022%20estima%20que%20la%20huella%20de%20carbono,el%20de%20la%20aviaci%20comercial.>> accessed February 20, 2025

- According to the Department of Defense's Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (US), in fiscal year 2021, the total emissions of the United States Department of Defense (DoD) were 51 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO₂e). Of these, 37% (19 MMTCO₂e) came from military installations, while the remaining 63% (32 MMTCO₂e) originated from operational sources. Jet fuel use accounted for 80% of DoD operational emissions and 50% of total DoD emissions in that year.⁶
- In addition, the U.S. military has been estimated to be the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels globally, with emissions exceeding those of industrialized countries such as Portugal and Denmark.⁷
- If the U.S. military were a country, it would rank forty-seven (47) in terms of global greenhouse gas emissions.⁸

These figures illustrate the significant impact on climate change of military operations and the importance of considering these emissions under the common but differentiated responsibilities to address climate change.

Maintaining armies not only reinforces structures of violence and conflict but also deepens the climate crisis. Diverting financial resources that could be used for climate justice, people's well-being, and peace exacerbates the vulnerabilities of frontline communities living through the climate crisis.

The war machine not only perpetuates violence but also contributes alarmingly to the climate crisis. While huge resources are allocated to military spending, vulnerable communities face droughts, hurricanes and displacement without the necessary support for adaptation or to opt for climate reparations to their territories.

It is ironic that the struggle for "securitize" global north society, is causing the greatest threat to humanity, climate breakdown, to be accelerated,

The question is: what does security really mean? Is it to accumulate weapons and military bases, or is it to guarantee a habitable planet for current and future generations?

⁶ *Department of Defense Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment* (obra original publicada en 2023, Departamento de Defensa Estados Unidos 2023)

⁷ 'Elephant in the room': What is the US military's carbon footprint?" (*Al Jazeera*, 12 de diciembre de 2023) <www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/12/elephant-in-the-room-the-us-militarys-devastating-carbon-footprint?utm_source=chatgpt.com> accedido el 26 de marzo de 2025

⁸ Jangira Lewis, "The Environmental Impact of the US Military | Earth.Org" (*Earth.Org*, 12 de noviembre de 2021) <https://earth.org/us-military-pollution/?utm_source=chatgpt.com> accedido el 26 de marzo de 2025.

2. Financing of military spending vs. defunding for Climate Change.

NATO member countries seek to increase spending on militarization by 2% of GDP⁹, of the thirty-one NATO member countries, eleven have reached this goal.¹⁰ Lately, there are calls for this increase to go beyond 3% or even reach up to 5% of the GDP.¹¹ Even the European Union is proposing to increase its military spending budget by about 150 billion Euros.¹² In other words, the richest countries, the main emitters of GHGs that are most responsible for the climate crisis, are disproportionately allocating more resources to military spending than to their responsibility in the fight against climate change.

The SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) shows that military spending has been increasing for nine years. In addition, the latest report records for the first time the increase in military spending in the five regions: Europe, America, Oceania, Asia and the Middle East. Since the first SIPRI report in 1988, the US has topped the list of countries with the highest military spending. For the 2023 report, the U.S. (\$916 billion), China (\$296 billion), and Russia (\$109 billion) top the list with a total of 61% of total global military spending.¹³

In contrast, financial flows to combat climate change remain insufficient. In the case of climate finance, richer countries have consistently failed to deliver on their promises to provide sufficient financing to the most vulnerable countries.

From civil society, it was expected that the New Quantified Collective Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) would reach an amount close to 5 trillion dollars per year. This financing was seen as critical to driving the climate action needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, strengthen adaptation, and address damage and loss.¹⁴ However, the decision adopted at COP29 established financing of only 1.3

⁹ "Increased military spending in NATO countries will generate an additional 467 million tonnes of CO₂ over eight years - Climática, the media specialized in climate and biodiversity" (*Climática, the media specialized in climate and biodiversity*) <<https://climatica.coop/aumento-gasto-militar-paises-otan-co2/>> accessed on February 19, 2025

¹⁰ "Global military spending hits a new record: why and what does it entail?" (*National Geographic Spain*) <www.nationalgeographic.com.es/mundo-ng/gasto-militar-mundial-alcanza-nuevo-record-que-significa_22117> accessed February 19, 2025

¹¹ "NATO's defence needs more than 3% GDP target, says Rutte" (*euronews*) <www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/01/13/boosting-natos-defence-capabilities-means-going-beyond-3-target-says-rutte> accedido el 27 de marzo de 2025

¹² Sorgi G, "EU pushes emergency plan to send €150B in defense loans to governments" (*POLITICO*, 4 de marzo de 2025) <www.politico.eu/article/ursula-von-der-leyen-proposes-new-150b-common-defense-fund-military-spending/> accedido el 27 de marzo de 2025

¹³ Press Release (*Home | SIPRI*) <www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Milex%20Press%20Release%20ESP.pdf> accessed 24 March 2025

¹⁴ COP 29 - Climate Action Network" (*Climate Action Network*) <<https://climatenetwork.org/updates/event-portal/cop-29/>> accedido el 24 de marzo de 2025

billion dollars per year, a figure widely questioned for its inadequacy and that excludes commitments to finance climate damage and loss.¹⁵

Concrete commitments to finance responses to loss and damage, enable adaptation and to take mitigation actions have become an act of charity, dissolving the responsibility of the Global North in the face of the Climate Crisis. This irresponsibility of the North to tackle the crisis, forces developing countries to aspiral of commitments and debt which end up benefiting developed countries.¹⁶ For example, the withdrawal of the US from multilateral climate efforts, specifically the Loss and Damage Response Fund. Its withdrawal leaves the fulfillment of the \$17.5 million commitment uncertain, generating pressure within the Loss and Damage Response Fund on how to redistribute efforts to secure its financing.¹⁷ This implies that developing countries must find the remaining billions of dollars needed to address loss and damage at their own cost through debt from global north creditors.

This dynamic not only involves diverting the money needed to mitigate, adapt and address damage and loss, but also increases the risk of fueling conflict, repression and human rights abuses for populations on the frontlines of climate change.¹⁸

3. The prospects of militarizing actions against Climate Change. A regional vision

Rich countries are exporting weapons and enhancing the military capacity in countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis, and Central America is no exception. This global north business venture is justified in a Latin American region, based on the excuse of investing in the armed forces as a necessity to respond to climate-related catastrophes. Many countries resort to their military in this regard; however, these military lead responses are often accompanied by oppressive power dynamics, gender violence, normalization of violence (especially armed violence), arms trafficking, the formation of armed gangs that dispute or share territories with the police, which in turn is militarized through the constitution of

¹⁵ "From Pledges to Action: Challenges Inherited from COP29" (*The Climate Road*) <<https://larutadelclima.org/2025/03/25/de-las-promesas-a-la-accion-retos-heredados-de-la-cop29/>> accessed on 27 March 2025

¹⁶ "Rich countries' repeated failure to meet their commitment to mobilise \$100 billion for climate finance undermines confidence in the negotiations and undermines climate action | Oxfam International" (*Oxfam International*) <www.oxfam.org/es/notas-prensa/el-reiterado-incumplimiento-por-parte-de-los-paises-ricos-de-su-compromiso-de> accessed 19 February 2025

¹⁷ "U.S. Withdraws from Loss and Damage Fund, Leaving Vulnerable Nations at Risk" (*Tierra Sigma*, March 8, 2025) <https://sigmaearth.com/es/Estados-Unidos-se-retira-del-fondo-de-pérdidas-y-daños--dejando-a-las-naciones-vulnerables-en-riesgo/#google_vignette> accessed March 26, 2025.

¹⁸ — "Climate Collateral: How Military Spending Accelerates Climate Breakdown" (*Transform defence for sustainable human safety*) <<https://transformdefence.org/publication/climate-collateral-how-military-spending-accelerates-climate-breakdown/>> accedido el 19 de marzo de 2025

special armed police groups.¹⁹ This generates a feeling of discontent, interference in their independence, neutrality and security in the communities and peoples of the region.²⁰

Militarization in Latin America not only implies territory occupation, but also hybrid warfare, with paramilitary forces and transnational crime for political and economic control.²¹ Arms trafficking from the U.S. and the expansion of organized crime strengthen illegal structures, exacerbating violence and poverty in the region. In recent years, arms purchase in Latin America have grown significantly, with the US, EU, Russia and China as the main suppliers, reflecting both political alliances and geopolitical strategies in the region.²² Globally, Latin America accounts for 11% of arms purchases. During the period 2005-2009, these acquisitions increased by 150%. In particular, the countries of South America allocated a total of 7,979 million US dollars to the purchase of weapons. In contrast, Central America recorded significantly lower spending, at \$247 million, an increase of 5% over the same period.²³

Throughout its history, Latin America has faced conflicts deeply linked to the structural violence of colonialism, the plundering of resources, and the implementation of international, multilateral, and transnational policies that have consolidated militarization as an apparently "legitimate" and effective strategy of control.²⁴ The sudden increase in criminal activities in mega-diverse areas has become a recurring argument to justify military intervention, especially in resource-rich territories. In addition, the discourse of "sustainable development" has been instrumentalized by capitalist elites as a justification for military presence in order to "protect" certain strategic spaces²⁵. In addition, it is reinforced by the recent trend of conceiving mega-diverse areas as "world heritage", promoted by

¹⁹ "Armies in Internal Security and Militarized Borders: Militarization in Latin America and the Caribbean" (*War Resisters' International*) <<https://wri-irg.org/es/story/2019/los-ejercitos-en-la-seguridad-interna-y-las-fronteras-militarizadas-militarizacion-en>> accessed March 19, 2025

²⁰ "The dangers of militarizing the climate crisis" (*FUHEM*) <www.fuhem.es/2021/11/05/los-peligros-de-militarizar-la-crisis-climatica/#How%20impact%20climate%20security%20on%20borders%20and%20the%20migration?>> accessed March 19, 2025

²¹ "Political Declaration of the International Forum "Militarization or Global Peace" in Our America, October 22 and 23, 2024, Medellín. – The Right to Live in Peace" (*The Right to Live in Peace – For Peace and Fraternity among Peoples*) <www.derechoalapaz.com/declaracion-politica-del-foro-internacional-militarizacion/> accessed on March 26, 2025.

²² Pere Ortega and Juan Sebastián Gómez, "Militarism in Latin America" (*ALBASUD - Research and Communication for Development*) <www.albasud.org/downloads/90.pdf> accessed March 26, 2025

²³ Ibid 21

²⁴ Ibid 12

²⁵ Imperial Geopolitics and Natural Resources" (*BioDiversidad LA*) <www.biodiversidadla.org/Documentos/Geopolitica-imperial-y-recursos-naturales-por-Gian-Carlo-Delgado-Ramos> accessed March 26, 2025

international organizations, under the premise of benefiting all humanity, but at the cost of our people's peace.²⁶

Along with the discourse of caring for mega-diverse areas and the sustainable development of resources, the argument of "protection against migration" is accompanied. Climate change is increasing people's vulnerability, which influences the decisions people make to exercise their right to move around their countries or cross borders on a large scale to protect their well-being. From the EU, efforts to criminalize or address "national security" interpret human mobility in the context of climate change as the fourth most critical security problem, considering it one of the greatest "threats" to global security.²⁷ Ironically, considering military action and labelling the right to human mobility as a threat is more likely to rightsholders insecured, threaten and often dead.

EU reports warn of the impact of "additional migratory stress" and the need for a comprehensive migration policy²⁸. These prejudices that seek to reinforce the use of violence to avoid responsibility for the climate crisis are reinforced by the militarization of borders, violence, weakening the right to asylum, the right to human mobility and exacerbating climate suffering, damage and loss. This structural violence affects people who seek their protection and exercise their human rights. Militarism and the criminalization of human mobility force people to take more dangerous routes and hostile environments in their search for protection of their human dignity.

It is equally important to make visible that the volume of international arms transfers continues to increase.²⁹ In the Central American region, arms transfers have played a crucial role in both the militarization of states and the strengthening of organized criminal gangs.

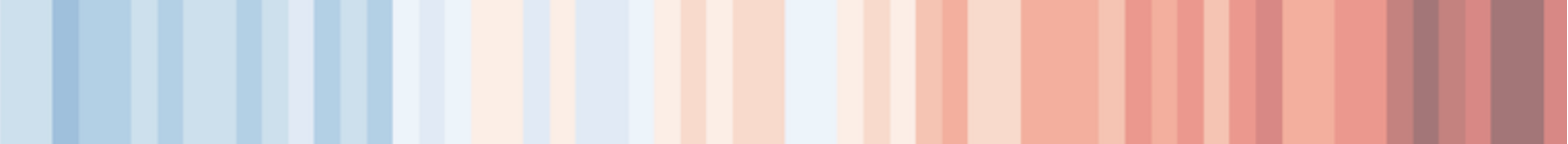
On the one hand, the proliferation of weapons in the hands of military and security forces has contributed to the increase in structural violence and the consolidation of a repressive apparatus in some countries. On the other hand, access to weapons by criminal groups has exacerbated insecurity and facilitated illicit activities such as drug trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion. There is profiteering from global north countries behind the securitization and transfer of weapons to our region.

²⁶Delgado Ramos GC, *Biodiversity, Sustainable Development and Militarization* (original work published in 2004, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Sciences and Humanities, 2015) [BIODIVERSITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MILITARIZATION. Looting schemes in Mesoamerica](#)

²⁷ Climate change and international security - Publications Office of the EU" (*Publications Office of the EU*) <<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/48gee3e8-41d1-4af1-bdcf-fa42f3355af1/language-en>> accedido el 26 de marzo de 2025

²⁸Bid 25

²⁹ SIPRI Yearbook 2010" (<https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>) <www.files.ethz.ch/isn/120441/SIPRIYB10summary.pdf> accedido el 26 de marzo de 2025



The circulation of weapons, often from international transfers, has fueled both state control over certain territories and the power of criminal organizations, creating a cycle of violence and destabilization that severely affects social cohesion and security throughout the region.³⁰ All of the above within the Latin American context increases the creation of figures of power where situations of appropriation, abuse and corruption increase, leading the region to greater vulnerability.

³⁰ :*In the Crosshairs: Firearms Trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean* (original work published in 2024, CSIS American Program 2024) https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-11/241119_Hernandez-Roy_Firearms.pdf?VersionId=qEvEIPzdSkMZkquLO5ZsDcH5o1J4BkfO

4. Costa Rica: neutrality and demilitarization

Costa Rica is a demilitarized and neutral country, yet absence of the military is a country decision not a requirement for a neutral state. Costa Rica abolished the army seven decades ago. On December 1, 1948, the symbolic act of surrender of the "Bellavista Barracks" to the National Museum of Costa Rica took place³¹. The decision to abolish the army was taken from a political rather than a pacifist perspective, seeking to create a climate of confidence and stability in the country after the Civil War of 1948.³²

The decision to abolish the army in Costa Rica became a symbol of its development model and an exception in Central America³³. This measure not only consolidated the country as the most stable in the region and one of the most solid democracies on the continent. It also generated benefits that transcended the absence of open conflicts. In the 25 years after abolition, social investment increased fivefold, from 2.6% to 13.4% of GDP³⁴. Prior to this decision, Costa Rica had the fourth-lowest GDP per capita growth rate in Latin America but later rose to second place.³⁵ The decision to become a neutral state was established by the approval of the Neutrality Law in 1986³⁶, according to which Costa Rica's neutrality is perpetual, active and demilitarized³⁷.

Costa Rica has built its national identity on the pillars of peace and demilitarization, which has allowed it to redirect its resources and efforts towards strategic areas such as education, health and sustainability. While other countries invest in the modernization of their armies and the acquisition of weapons, Costa Rica has maintained its commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, promoting international law and multilateralism as pillars of its foreign policy.

The legal prohibition of the installation of industries dedicated to the manufacture of weapons of war³⁸ reinforces this commitment and has allowed the country to focus its diplomacy on the search for leadership on issues of global relevance, such as climate change. This positioning has been key to strengthening its image

³¹ Learn about the history of the Abolition of the Army in Costa Rica | Ministry of Culture and Youth" (*Ministry of Culture and Youth*) <www.mcj.go.cr/sala-de-prensa/noticias/conozca-la-historia-de-la-abolicion-del-ejercito-en-costa-rica> accessed March 25, 2025

³² Learn about the history of the Abolition of the Army in Costa Rica | Ministry of Culture and Youth" (*Ministry of Culture and Youth*) <www.mcj.go.cr/sala-de-prensa/noticias/conozca-la-historia-de-la-abolicion-del-ejercito-en-costa-rica> accessed March 25, 2025

³³ Costa Rica without an army: a cost-benefit Central American rarity" (*Divergentes*) <www.divergentes.com/militarismo-en-centroamerica/costa-rica/> accessed March 25, 2025.

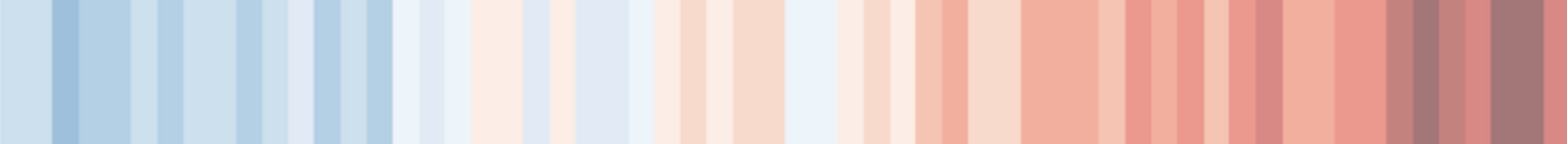
³⁴ Costa Rica without an army: a cost-benefit Central American rarity" (*Divergentes*) <www.divergentes.com/militarismo-en-centroamerica/costa-rica/> accessed March 25, 2025.

³⁵ Costa Rica without an army: a cost-benefit Central American rarity" (*Divergentes*) <www.divergentes.com/militarismo-en-centroamerica/costa-rica/> accessed March 25, 2025.

³⁶ "Costa Rican Legal Information System" (*Office of the Attorney General of the Republic-Online Services*) <www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/pronunciamiento/pro_ficha.aspx?param1=PRD¶m6=1&nDictamen=12281&strTipM=T> accessed March 25, 2025.

³⁷ Ibid 22

³⁸ Ibid 22



on the international stage, consolidating itself as an actor in negotiations on sustainability, climate finance and human rights.

In practice, the absence of an arms industry not only reduces the possibility of the country participating in conflict dynamics but also positions it as an example of investment in development models based on peace and cooperation. Costa Rican diplomacy has used this comparative advantage to promote global initiatives in the areas of disarmament, human rights and climate action, demonstrating that international leadership does not depend on military force, but on the ability to build alliances and solutions to common challenges.

This allows the country to strengthen its vision of peace based on ecological stability and the well-being of its citizens, in contrast to the traditional vision of national security focused on military force and confrontation.

La Ruta del Clima, reaffirms the importance of Costa Rica continuing to consolidate its role in the global climate agenda, not only as a country that advocates for more ambitious commitments in mitigation, adaptation, and damage and loss, but also as an example of how investment in peace can translate into social stability and development. We promote a vision in which Costa Rica's leadership promotes strategies that integrate climate justice with social justice, ensuring that the most vulnerable communities are protagonists in the construction of solutions to face the climate crisis.

In this context, our work as an organization is to continue supporting and promoting initiatives that reinforce this positioning, demanding greater coherence between the historical national climate policy and demilitarization. It is essential that Costa Rica's international leadership is reflected in tangible actions that benefit the communities most exposed to climate impacts and that the commitments made in international forums that enable peace and denounce militarization.

5. Conclusions

Climate change has become a socio-political issue increasingly addressed from a security perspective, which has led to its progressive militarization. This trend is reflected in strategies that prioritize control, violence, and intervention, as opposed to structural solutions, diverting attention and resources from the real causes of the climate crisis. Instead of allocating funding and efforts to mitigation and adaptation, states are betting on military approaches that not only aggravate the environmental crisis but also increase the vulnerability of marginalized populations.

The impact of militarization is not limited to its economic cost or the consolidation of structures of violence but has direct consequences on climate change. The military industry is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, contributing significantly to environmental deterioration. In addition, militarism as a state policy reinforces an extractivist model that destroys territories, displaces communities and deepens inequalities, leaving aside dialogue and human rights in favor of imposition and control. Despite this, developed countries continue to drive the arms race globally, perpetuating the climate and socio-environmental crisis.

Against this backdrop, Costa Rica has shown that peace and demilitarization can be fundamental pillars for sustainable development and social stability. The absence of an army has allowed resources to be redirected to key sectors such as education, health and the environment, consolidating its leadership in international diplomacy based on cooperation and multilateralism. This model, in addition to strengthening its global image, has positioned the country as a benchmark in sustainability and climate action, showing that security can be built from social and ecological well-being, rather than armed confrontation.

As a region, it is imperative to claim the right to peace, not only within our societies and economies, but also in our relationship with nature. The climate crisis demands responses that prioritize environmental justice and collective well-being, rather than militarized approaches that perpetuate violence and extractivism. It is necessary to commit to development models that guarantee human security through investment in sustainable solutions, ensuring that resources are allocated to meet the real and immediate needs of the most vulnerable communities.

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