**Disarmament for a Sustainable Future**

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Disarmament Week arrives like a clarion call for introspection, compelling us in Pakistan to rethink our approach to security, climate change, and national defense. We find ourselves ensnared in an arms race, propelled by regional tensions and a relentless pursuit of military might.

Yet, amidst this fervent drive for accumulation, we face an undeniable truth: military activity is accelerating the climate crisis. This is not just an abstract concern; it has profound implications for the health of our planet and the well-being of our people. The stark reality is that military operations contribute approximately 5.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, in 2017, U.S. defense activities alone emitted more carbon than entire nations such as Sweden and Portugal. This should alarm us, particularly in a nation that is already grappling with the devastating effects of climate change.

The unbridled military expenditures that prioritize arms over environmental sustainability are not just a budgetary miscalculation- they represent a colossal misalignment of values. In 2022, global military spending soared to a staggering $2.24 trillion, with a jaw-dropping $82.9 billion earmarked solely for nuclear arsenals. Imagine the transformative impact if even a fraction of this expenditure were redirected toward sustainable development and climate adaptation initiatives in Pakistan. We must ask ourselves: can we afford to overlook the ecological costs of militarization any longer?

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In a world where the specter of climate breakdown looms larger every day, it is imperative that we reassess our understanding of security. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has made it abundantly clear that moderate reductions in military spending could free up vast resources to combat climate change. This presents a tantalizing opportunity for Pakistan: to lead a regional shift from an arms-centric security paradigm to one focused on human security and environmental resilience.

The prevailing narrative often conflates military might with national security, perpetuating the notion that we must fortify our defenses against perceived external threats. This mindset is no longer tenable. The most pressing threat we face is not a distant adversary but the encroaching reality of climate change, which endangers our very existence. Research by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) underscores the catastrophic consequences of nuclear conflict, revealing that even a limited exchange of nuclear weapons between India and Pakistan could claim the lives of up to one-third of the global population. Such a prospect forces us to confront the absurdity of relying on nuclear deterrence as a form of security.

Instead of perpetuating the cycle of militarization, we must embrace disarmament as a strategic imperative. This is not merely about relinquishing weapons; it is about reimagining what security means in the modern age. True security should be measured not by the number of tanks or missiles in our arsenal but by the resilience and well-being of our population in the face of existential challenges like climate change. If we can envision a Pakistan where military expenditures are curtailed, we can also envision a nation where those resources are redirected toward critical infrastructure projects, renewable energy initiatives, and climate resilience strategies.

Disarmament Week challenges us to broaden our perspectives, to think beyond the conventional metrics of power. It invites us to envision a future where our resources are not squandered on weaponry but invested in the health, education, and prosperity of our citizens. As the global community gathers at forums like COP28, with an increasing focus on the intersections of health, peace, and climate, Pakistan has a unique opportunity to lead the charge for demilitarization as a pathway to climate justice.

The time has come to view disarmament not as a loss of power but as a crucial step toward a more stable, peaceful, and sustainable future. This is not just about reducing the military footprint; it is about fostering a holistic understanding of security that prioritizes the well-being of humanity and the planet. We are called upon to be the stewards of a world where collaboration, empathy, and resilience triumph over fear and conflict.

Ultimately, our understanding of security must evolve. The real question we must grapple with is this: how do we forge a future that prioritizes human life and the health of our planet over the ephemeral gains of military might? In this critical moment, true security lies not in the weapons we hold but in the systems we build to ensure our collective survival. Disarmament is not merely an option; it is a necessity for our shared future. By embracing this paradigm, we can not only safeguard the lives of our citizens but also protect the environment that sustains us all. The time for action is now, and the path to a just and sustainable future begins with our commitment to disarmament.

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