

## B. Emerging international norms for reduced military spending

While the 1990s have witnessed a welcome decline in military spending, a key political question that must attend efforts to link ODA to military spending reductions in developing countries is whether there is in fact an emerging international consensus regarding the need to reduce military spending. A recent analysis of conditionality questions the existence of any such norm<sup>6</sup> on grounds that no international treaty exists that commits countries to spend as little as possible, or some specific proportion of their budgets, on military forces. Nor is there, the authors argue, any "habitual practice" or common law convention in support of an overall commitment to military spending reduction, and furthermore, there is no evidence that a significant number of individual states has unilaterally declared adherence to such norms. The study thus concludes that there is no norm regarding military spending that is either formally established or accepted by convention. But the authors may, in fact, be overstating the case.

Through several instruments the international community has explicitly issued general and comprehensive calls to minimize military spending. The international community has stated its collective intention to keep military spending as low as possible, consistent with legitimate defence needs, has formally agreed that reductions in armaments and armed forces are an essential component of maintaining international peace and security, and has asserted that military spending reductions are essential to economic development.

The *UN Charter* (Article 26) assigns to the Security Council responsibility for formulating and submitting to members of the UN plans for "the regulation of armaments" in order to "promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with *the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources*" (emphasis added). Hence, while there is obviously no definition of excessive military spending provided here or in subsequent international agreements, there is established the clear principle that the use of

---

<sup>6</sup> Peter Uvin and Isabelle Biagiotti, "Global Governance and the 'New' Political Conditionality," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, Volume 2, Number 3, Sept.-Dec. 1996, pp. 377-400.