

Issues Related to the Linking of Development Assistance to the Promotion of Reductions in Military Spending in Southern Africa: A Non-Governmental Perspective

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A. NGOs in Southern Africa

Some distinctions with regard to NGOs have to be made at the outset. There are several thousand NGOs in South Africa but far fewer in other Southern African countries (Southern Africa is defined as states which are members of the Southern African Development Community [SADC]).² Most of these NGOs are non-political and non-developmental in nature—a fact often overlooked. For example, some of the largest NGOs in South Africa are concerned with the welfare of animals or are essentially business or social clubs taken up with their own social and charitable activities (Rotarians, Lions, etc.). Many of the NGOs in other Southern African states would also declare themselves to be ‘non-political’ in the sense that they have limited welfare briefs or are regarded as semi-state structures.

¹This report constitutes the analysis of the author, who has been involved in defence and security debates and NGO activities in South and Southern Africa for over 15 years. It is a personal view. Although informed by discussions with several NGOs on this question, it considers the issues involved rather than the views of NGOs.

In part, this is because most indigenous Southern African NGOs do not have a formed view on this matter—telephone calls to the responsible officials at a number of NGOs indicated that most had not considered it. Nevertheless, the broad framework within which NGOs might consider this issue is examined.

This report does not examine the views of international NGOs which might be operating in Southern Africa—any research into their views would be better done at their headquarters.

The report is structured into four parts:

- A. A framework for understanding the position of NGOs in Southern Africa;
- B. The issue of defining military spending and excessive military spending;
- C. Measures which can be taken to reduce demand for military equipment and arms imports; here the viability and implications of some actions being contemplated by donor countries are considered;
- D. Conclusion.

²These states are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.