

**Towards “the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”: southern NGO voices on military spending and conditionality***Ernie Regehr***A. Introduction**

Whether the perspective is that of a northern donor Government committed to efficient management of dwindling development assistance funds, or southern Governments and NGOs faced with the enduring crisis of scarce capital, the substantial human and material resources still consumed for military purposes are being eyed with growing interest. The emerging and, by now, widely respected concept of “common security” (also referred to as “human”<sup>1</sup> or “cooperative” security, or a variety of other terms) recognizes that the security of individuals and communities depends significantly on a commitment to recovering resources from non-productive military spending and making them available for social and economic development. Hence, calls for military spending reductions and accompanying military reforms in the South are premised on both economic and traditional security grounds. With the ideological and competitive divisions of the Cold War now largely set aside, a dispassionate review of post World War II military roles suggests that an excessive reliance on military responses to local and regional political conflict contributes not only to persistent warfare and high levels of casualties, but also to the continued confiscation of resources desperately needed for development.

These early years of the post-Cold War era have spawned a broad-range of proposals and initiatives in support of demilitarization, North and South. Nicole Ball of the Washington-based Overseas Development Council describes this body of proposals for military reduction and

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy has welcomed the international community’s efforts to rethink the concept of security and to elaborate the concept of “human security.” “The concept of human security,” he has recently said, “recognizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity are as important to global peace as are arms control and disarmament.” (“Building Peace to Last: Establishing a Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative,” Notes for an address by the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy at York University, Toronto, October 30, 1996).