

Belgium's contribution in response to resolution 80/25 of the UN General Assembly on the relationship between disarmament and development

Belgium aligns with the objectives set out in UNGA Resolution 80/25 and welcomes the continued attention of the General Assembly to the relationship between disarmament and development. We share the concern expressed in the resolution regarding increasing global military expenditure and its potential implications for sustainable development. Belgium equally supports the Secretary-General's call, as reflected in the report *The Security We Need*, to carefully assess the opportunity costs associated with defence spending and to promote a balanced and human-centred approach to security.

At the same time, Belgium believes that a comprehensive understanding of this relationship must take into account the evolving international and regional security environment in which States operate today, including the re-emergence of violent conflict, military threats and hybrid actions in our region.

The UN Charter states that international peace and security should be established with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, but the Charter also does not impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, its military threats against other neighbouring countries, and its hybrid actions against Belgium and its allies, alongside deteriorating security situations in other regions, demonstrates that the risk of interstate conflict remains very real. These developments have eroded trust, increased uncertainty, and weakened the rules-based international order that underpins both peace and development. In such a context, Belgium considers that increasing its military capabilities is necessary to maintain a credible collective deterrence and defence against military aggression. This is not in contradiction with the objective of development, but rather a necessary condition for its preservation.

Belgium therefore sees its recent increase in defence spending as a response to a tangible and growing security challenge. Military capabilities are not pursued as an end in themselves, but as instruments to deter aggression and protect security and peace. Belgium maintains that neither armament nor disarmament constitutes a goal in itself; the ultimate objective remains the preservation of peace, freedom and security.

Belgium also wishes to underline that defence spending must be considered in the broader context of strategic dependency. Recent developments have highlighted the importance of enhancing European responsibility and resilience in the field of defence. Belgium's efforts to strengthen its defence capabilities are therefore part of a broader objective to contribute more effectively to collective security arrangements and to reduce excessive dependence on external actors. This approach reinforces, rather than undermines, multilateralism by ensuring that all partners contribute fairly to shared security.

At the same time, Belgium recognises the "security paradox" highlighted in both the resolution and the Secretary-General's report: while military spending can contribute to security, it can also generate instability. Belgium shares the concern that unchecked military build-ups risk fuelling arms races, undermining trust, and weakening prospects for peace.

For this reason, Belgium remains firmly committed to a balanced approach that combines defence with robust support for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

International agreements, transparency measures and confidence-building mechanisms are essential tools to prevent destabilising arms races and reduce the risk of conflict. Belgium has a long-standing tradition of engagement in this field and continues to support key instruments such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, The Cluster Munition Convention, The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Vienna Document and all multilateral export control regimes. We also actively promote dialogue on emerging technologies and advocate for responsible innovation, including the principle of human control in the use of force.

Belgium sees deterrence and arms control not as opposing approaches, but as complementary elements of a coherent security policy. This dual-track approach reflects the need to address both immediate security threats and long-term stability. It also echoes the broader understanding that sustainable security cannot be achieved through military means alone, but requires strong international norms, cooperation and dialogue.

Belgium rejects the notion that defence and development are inversely related. On the contrary, we consider them to be interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Sustainable development is a key driver of long-term stability, while security is a prerequisite for development to take place. Without a secure environment, investments in development cannot deliver their full impact; conversely, without development, the root causes of instability remain unaddressed. In this regard, Belgium pursues an integrated and comprehensive approach to security, whereby defence, diplomacy and development—the so-called “3D approach”—are mutually reinforcing pillars. Defence provides protection against immediate threats, diplomacy enables dialogue, conflict prevention and the strengthening of multilateral norms, while development addresses the structural drivers of fragility and instability. Together, these three dimensions form the foundation of a coherent and sustainable security policy.

Despite budgetary pressures, Belgium remains firmly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals. It continues to allocate substantial resources to official development assistance (€ 2,42 billion disbursed in 2025) and maintains a strong focus on the most vulnerable and fragile contexts. Belgian development cooperation supports multilateral institutions, contributes to humanitarian action, and promotes inclusive and sustainable growth. This commitment reflects our conviction that addressing poverty, inequality and weak governance is essential to preventing conflict and building lasting peace.

In conclusion, Belgium shares the objectives of the UN General Assembly and the Secretary-General in promoting a balanced relationship between disarmament and development. However, we emphasise that this balance must be achieved in a way that takes into account current security realities. In today’s world, credible defence, effective arms control and sustained investment in development are not competing priorities, but interdependent pillars of a comprehensive approach to security. Belgium will therefore continue to advocate for an approach that combines strength with cooperation, deterrence with dialogue, and security with development. Only through such a balanced and integrated approach can we ensure lasting peace and a sustainable future for all.
