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\$2 trillion for war vs \$100 billion to save the planet

written by Murad Qureshi
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A woman stands in front of her house after a flood hit Kurigram district in northern Bangladesh, on July 26, 2019.

During late April and early May, South Asia experienced the terrible impacts of global warming. Temperatures [reached](#) almost 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in some cities in the region. These high temperatures came alongside dangerous flooding in Northeast India and in Bangladesh, as the rivers burst their banks, with [flash floods](#) taking place in places like Sunamganj in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

Saleemul Haq, the director of the [International Center of Climate Change and Development](#), is from Bangladesh. He is a veteran of the UN climate change negotiations. When Haq read a tweet by Marianne Karlsen, the co-chair of the UN's Adaptation Committee, which [said](#) that “[m]ore time is needed to reach an agreement,” while referring to the negotiations on loss and damage finance, he [tweeted](#): “The one thing we have run out of is Time! Climate change impacts are already happening, and poor people are suffering losses and damages due to the emissions of the rich. Talk is no longer an acceptable substitute for action (money!)” Karlsen's comment came in light of the treacle-slow process of [agreement](#) on the “loss and damage” agenda for the 27th Conference of Parties or COP27 meeting to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022.

In 2009, at COP15, developed countries of the world had agreed to a [\\$100 billion](#) annual adaptation assistance fund, which was supposed to be paid by 2020. This fund was intended to assist countries of the Global South to shift their reliance on carbon to renewal sources of energy and to adapt to the realities of the climate catastrophe. At the time of the Glasgow COP26 meeting in November 2021, however, developed countries were unable to meet this commitment. The \$100 billion may seem like a modest fund, but is far less than the “[Trillion Dollar Climate Finance Challenge](#),” that will be required to ensure comprehensive climate action.

The richer states—led by the West—have not only refused to seriously fund

adaptation but they have also reneged on the original agreements, such as the [Kyoto Protocol](#) (1997); the U.S. Congress has [refused](#) to ratify this important step toward mitigating the climate crisis. The United States has shifted the goalposts for reducing its methane emissions and has refused to account for the [massive output](#) of carbon emissions by the U.S. military.

Germany's money goes to war not climate

Germany hosts the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In June, as a prelude to COP27, the UN held a [conference](#) in Bonn on climate change. The talks ended in acrimony over finance for what is known as “loss and damage.” The European Union consistently blocked all discussions on compensation. Eddy Pérez of the Climate Action Network, Canada, [said](#), “Consumed by their narrow interests, rich nations and in particular countries in the European Union, came to the Bonn Climate Conference to block, delay and undermine efforts from people and communities on the frontlines addressing the losses and damage caused by fossil fuels.”

On the table is the hypocrisy of countries such as Germany, which claims to lead on these issues, but instead has been sourcing fossil fuels overseas and has been spending increasing funds on their military. At the same time, these countries have denied support to developing countries facing devastation from climate-induced superstorms and rising seas.

After the recent German elections, hopes were raised that the new coalition of the Social Democrats with the Green Party would lift up the green agenda. However, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has [promised](#) €100 billion for the military, “the biggest increase in the country’s military expenditure since the end of the Cold War.” He has also committed to “[spending] more than 2 percent of the country’s gross domestic product on the military.” This means more money for the military and less money for climate mitigation and green transformation.

The military and climate catastrophe

The money that is being swallowed into the Western military establishments does not only drift away from any climate spending but also promotes greater climate catastrophe. The U.S. military is the largest institutional polluter on the planet. The maintenance of its more than 800 military bases around the world, for instance, means that the U.S. military [consumes](#) 395,000 gallons of oil daily. In 2021, the world's governments [spent](#) \$2 trillion on weapons, with the leading countries being those who are the richest (as well as the most sanctimonious on the climate debate). Money is available for war but not to deal with the climate catastrophe.

The way weapons have poured into the Ukraine conflict gives many of us pause. The prolongation of that war has [placed](#) 49 million more people at risk of famine in 46 countries, [according](#) to the “Hunger Hotspots” report by the United Nations agencies, as a result of the extreme weather conditions and due to conflicts. Conflict and organized violence were the main sources of food insecurity in Africa and the Middle East, specifically in northern Nigeria, central Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Syria. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the food crisis by driving up the price of agricultural commodities. Russia and Ukraine together account for around 30 percent of the global wheat trade. So, the longer the Ukraine war continues, the more “hunger hotspots” will grow, taking food insecurity beyond just Africa and the Middle East.

While one COP meeting has already taken place on the African continent, another will take place later this year. First, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, hosted the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in May and then Sharm el-Sheikh will host the UN Climate Change Conference. These are major forums for African states to put on the table the great damage done to parts of the continent due to the climate catastrophe.

When the representatives of the countries of the world gather at Sharm el-Sheikh,

Egypt, in November 2022 for COP27, they will hear Western representatives talk about climate change, make pledges, and then do everything possible to continue to exacerbate the catastrophe. What we saw in Bonn is a prelude to what will be a fiasco in Sharm el-Sheikh.

This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#). Murad Qureshi is a former member of the London Assembly and a former chair of the Stop the War Coalition.

