

**CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT AT THE
REGIONAL REVIEW CONFERENCE FOR THE GENEVA DECLARATION
*Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia***

FINAL SESSION, 9 July

We, civil society, gathered at the Regional Review Conference for the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence & Development, 8-9 July 2014, in order to review progress in implementing the principles of the Geneva Declaration.

Post-2015 Development Framework

The regional conference took place as States prepare to negotiate a new development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We affirm our commitment to work for an inclusive post-2015 development framework. Globally, roughly 1.5 billion people live in situations affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale, organized criminal violence.ⁱ

On current trends, 75% of people in extreme poverty will be living in countries suffering from high levels of violence by 2030.ⁱⁱ According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 51 million people are now displaced due to armed violence and conflict – a figure that has almost doubled in the past five years.ⁱⁱⁱ

Violence is not just a concern of the poor. Violence is a universal issue, affecting people in developing, middle-income and even well-developed countries. In each context, people affected by violence and conflict are more likely to be under-nourished, suffer from high infant mortality rates, have lower life expectancy, and lack regular access to clean water and other services.

We believe that to create peaceful societies, a post-2015 development framework should promote a reduction in violent deaths and the numbers of people affected by violence. It should reduce external stresses, including transnational organised crime, corruption, bribery, the illicit trafficking of arms and other commodities that fuel violence and conflict, and illicit financial flows. It should strengthen institutions, as well as public confidence in institutions, access to justice and the protection of human rights.

We consider efforts to separate conflict, violence and fragility from development to be incongruous with the principles of the Geneva Declaration.

We call on all States and other international actors to support a post-2015 development framework with a standalone goal for peaceful and non-violent societies.

Tools of violence

We, civil society, call on all States to establish and implement, as appropriate to their national circumstances, effective public policies (legislation and practices) to better control the availability and potential misuse of small arms. Among these, we particularly encourage the provision of national commissions on small arms and light weapons (SALWs), as established in the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms. These bodies should involve all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, to ensure coherence and effectiveness

We emphasise that disarmament and arms control programmes should consider root causes of the demand for and supply of weapons. Programmes must be measured not solely by the number of weapons collected, but by actual and perceived security, trust in the State, and ultimately reductions in violent deaths and injuries.

Measuring and monitoring armed violence

To measure the progress of a post-2015 framework and strengthen efforts to reduce armed violence and insecurity, we call on States to improve their own national measuring and monitoring systems.

Priority should be given to the harmonization of local, national and international practices and methodologies to collect and record data.

It is recommended that States and local authorities produce regular national and local reports on violence and security via multi-stakeholder processes engaging relevant civil society actors, international organisations and government institutions. Evidence should be made public, and inform comprehensive analysis, and drive decision-making to reduce and prevent armed violence.

We highlight the need for increased data disaggregation, including by sex, age, impairment, means used to commit violence, geographic location, motivation for the crime, and nationality and/or ethnicity. This should apply across research and data systems in order to better measure the effects of violence on women, men, children and communities.

Effective partnerships and assistance

We urge states and donors to push for improved coordination and information sharing of best practices among civil society, the UN, its specialized agencies, and other multilateral bodies.

We recommend South–South and triangular cooperation and initiatives that encourage countries facing similar challenges as a means of sharing their experiences. Cooperation should involve local actors, for example through partnerships among municipalities, cities, and community leaders.

We call on international donors to invest in armed violence prevention and reduction. These efforts should draw on the comparative strengths of partners including civil society organisations, international organisations, the UN, the private sector, and community-based organisations.

We underscore that the financial and logistical support of States is crucial to the survival of millions of people at risk. We ask that States recognise the capacity and expertise of civil society in this area and foster partnerships to strengthen cumulative impact in communities affected by armed violence.

We highlight the need to link global processes, such as the Geneva Declaration and other diplomatic initiatives, to local realities and communities affected by armed violence.

In this sense, States should continue to pursue integrated, ‘whole of society’ approaches to reduce and prevent armed violence. The importance of participatory policy making that engages local actors and different sectors is central to such an approach.

We invite all interested partners to engage in multi-stakeholder collaborations, for example via the Global Alliance on Armed Violence (GAAV).

Victims and survivors

We, civil society, call on States and other stakeholders to develop policy and programmes that recognise, protect and provide for the rights of armed violence victims and survivors, their families and their communities.

Efforts should be made to support capacity building of advocacy leaders among the survivors of armed violence, and to include them in decision making.

In support of innovative solutions to address the growing problem of involuntary displacement, we urge States to recognise displacement as a development challenge, as well as a humanitarian and protection issue in global policy.

Gender

We call on all States to holistically implement the Women, Peace & Security agenda including through 'national to regional' policies or action plans, underlining the importance of the meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Gender perspectives should be incorporated in policies and programs, and include efforts to transform negative forms of masculinities and existing power structures, which perpetuate structural gender inequalities within public institutions, including in the security sector. We also encourage States to share good practices in this area.

We call on all States and international institutions to mainstream gender and increase the engagement of men in the development and implementation of policies and programmes that promote equality, ensure the protection of human rights and seek to prevent all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Recognising that males account for disproportionately high numbers of perpetrators as well as direct victims of armed violence, we underline the importance of targeted programming to reduce high risks experienced by young men.

At risk groups

We call on States to protect at risk groups from armed violence, including members of LGBTI communities.

ⁱ World Bank (2011) *World Development Report 2011: Conflict Security and Development*, Available online: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf

ⁱⁱ OECD (2014) *Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States* OECD: Paris p 17.

ⁱⁱⁱ UNHCR (2014), *World Refugee Day: Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time in post-World War II era*, 20 June, Available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html>