

MEDIA RELEASE

**Regional Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, 8-9 July 2014 | CIGG Geneva**

Sustainable development is impossible in the absence of peace and security, and that these elements need to be addressed in the framework that will follow on from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), said Mr Yves Rossier, State Secretary of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, at the opening session of the Regional Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development this morning.

The Conference, being held in Geneva on 8 and 9 July, brings together representatives from across Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to discuss how to affect measurable reductions in armed violence, and improved development, both in the region and globally.

While these regions enjoy relatively low rates of armed violence generally, and have seen significant measurable reductions since 2004, they do still face a number of challenges. These include:

- The regions together have more than their share of lethal violence against women: while they are home to 16 % of the world population, and around 14% of the world's female population, their overall rate of lethal violence is less than 10%, yet they account for 16% of female victims.
- Globally, women account for 16% of victims of lethal armed violence, yet in Europe 31% of victims are women (in Caucasus 7%, and in Central Asia 24% of victims are women).

Speaking at the opening session, UN Women Regional Director Ms Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed the need for gender issues to be mainstreamed in the security and development agenda, stressing that the erosion of women's rights was a common thread in the rise of violent extremist movements.

Women and children suffer especially in conflict and post-conflict environments, she said, noting that they make up a disproportionately large proportion of displaced people as a result of conflicts.

Mr Michael Møller, Acting Director General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, called for a change in the narrative about security, specifically to include a greater focus on reducing illicit small arms flows, and increasing respect for human rights. The Geneva Declaration, he noted, was a good model of an innovative policy instrument that promoted a more inclusive approach to security and development issues.

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