

# Chair's Summary

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## *Ending armed violence for peace and development*

### **Geneva Declaration 2014 Regional Review Conference for the Caucasus, Central Asia and Europe**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 10 July 2014** - The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development Regional Review Conference (RRC) held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 8 and 9 July 2014, brought together 180 participants from across Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, including representatives from 41 governments. Participants discussed how measurable reductions in armed violence and improved development can be reached, regionally and globally.

The conference discussed the commitment of States and civil society organizations on to the reduction of the global burden of armed violence, both in conflict situations and in contexts of insecurity.

The high-level conference panel stressed the need for a change in the narrative of security and for a shift in the way we think about and approach armed violence, peace, and security. The panel stressed that the Geneva Declaration and other Geneva-based platforms should offer a model for breaking down silos existing between sectors and for integrating research and programming to achieve results.

The event highlighted the fact that armed violence is a universal issue and States need to share the burden of addressing its consequences and to explore the underlying causes of insecurity and violence. This needs to involve global and local actors, particularly with a focus on urban areas. The protection of human rights, the empowerment of women, and inclusive, sustainable socio-economic development were considered to be particularly important factors for addressing the risk of armed violence.

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development emphasizes that armed violence is both a cause and consequence of underdevelopment, and that in different situations it can obstruct the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (See the Outcome Document, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, 2011.) The ongoing process in which member states are developing the post-2015 development framework provides an opportunity to raise this dilemma and the imperative of including peace and security as integral components of a sustainable development framework that will succeed the MDGs outlined in 2000.

Issues that need to be integrated meaningfully in the new development framework include: personal safety; rule of law; the capacity of the state to provide security and justice and to reduce socio-economic inequalities; and various external stress factors (such as illicit and organized flows of drugs, arms and conflict commodities, financial flows, and human trafficking). As violence is globally interconnected and prevalent, the responsibility of achieving peaceful and inclusive societies needs to be shared among all States. This burden should not be borne alone by a specific group of countries.

Keeping in mind the goals of expanding and sustaining development for all, reducing the global burden of violence, and embracing a more cohesive development agenda (one that is sensitive to violence and conflict), it is necessary to address the concerns some States still have. While pursuing the dialogue with States on the content and substance of potential sustainable development goals (SDGs), it will be important to clarify key concepts and to define the means of their implementation.

Although violence is a global issue, as yet, no globally recognized measurement of peace, violence, or rule of law exists. Research over the years, however, has shown that such issues can be measured. Accordingly, there is a need for investing in data collection systems and capacities to inform global and national policy-making.

In looking at the dimensions of armed violence and insecurity, both regionally and globally, the conference stressed the significant role of small arms in the global burden of armed violence and called upon states to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty as a key step in reducing armed violence and enabling development. Organized crime and corruption were considered additional vectors of insecurity bearing regional and global implications, such as the trafficking of humans and weapons, narcotics, and other illicit goods. In order to tackle such threats more effectively, a deeper understanding is required of the dynamics of violence and insecurity, within the region and inter-regionally, and a focus on what criminal groups *do* rather than who they *are*. This may involve rethinking certain aspects and definitions of domestic legislation and those appearing in the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Harmonizing definitions and domestic legislation would then also improve the response to organized criminal groups operating transnationally.

In particular, the following messages emerged from the presentations and debates:

### **Generating data and measuring to achieve results**

The presentations highlighted the importance of harvesting data on security and violence to support the formulation of public policies and programmes.

Current discussions on the post-2015 development framework offer a unique opportunity to promote effective and concerted data collection, aiming for timely and high-quality data; such data would be relevant for policy use for development and for humanitarian aid. The generation and availability of timely, impartial, and reliable data can strengthen local capacities and ensure that 'no one is left behind', thereby avoiding the discrimination against those who cannot benefit from efficient monitoring systems.

Data collection systems should facilitate and inform the development of appropriate policies and programmes and the subsequent assessment of their impact. The session highlighted the need

for a critical rethinking of current approaches to measurement and evaluation acknowledging that measuring impact calls for time and resources, that a more flexible and longer term relationship is required to develop usable data collection systems, and that ‘what counts’ warrants more attention than ‘what is countable’.

### **Armed violence reduction and prevention: between disarmament and development**

The concepts of armed violence reduction and prevention (AVRP) cut broadly across established communities such as ‘development’ and ‘disarmament’. As such, AVRP challenges established operational silos by calling for the development a holistic vision—shared among those called to operate in a given situation—and for interventions that will address the specificities of violence and its related and underlying risk factors. To promote sustainable development and, consequently, improve co-existence, inequality, youth unemployment, and a general lack of opportunities all need to be addressed. In short, insecurity should be a priority for the development of policies and strategies.

AVRP calls for policies and programmes that focus on: the manifestation and consequences of violence, the reduction and prevention of the use of weapons, and long-term work on the social and economic drivers of such violence. The presence of weapons should be taken into account and tackled, as it is a source of increased insecurity.

By providing a framework for integrated action, this approach allows for partnerships to be built among stakeholders from various sectors, each working within its own mandate. Nonetheless, the challenges inherent in developing operational AVRP interventions based on holistic, multi-stakeholder, multi-sector approaches are numerous, especially when institutions want to address specific forms of violence by limiting their actions to sector-specific interventions. Additionally, AVRP competes with other established concepts and operational frameworks such as crime prevention, conflict reduction, or even post-conflict stabilization. This calls for the translations of terminology among communities unfamiliar with the each other’s concepts.

### **Women, peace, and security and small arms**

The session highlighted the fact that in many cases, when the disarmament discourse focuses on technical aspects of small arms, it may miss out on the human dimension. This shortcoming can form an obstacle to community participation, particularly from women.

AVRP interventions need to incorporate inclusive, bottom-up approaches that draw upon input from women. More women should be recruited to security services and also retained by ensuring that existing regulations do not impede their career advancement. Furthermore, a broader vision is required to tackle the matter of masculinities, which includes changing the perception of firearms as markers of power, masculinity, and status. This calls for wider educational work aimed at women and men to changing societal attitudes towards violence against women and towards gun ownership and use. While National Action Plans (NAPs) under UNSCR 1325 serve to prioritize some of these issues, they should be seen not as an end in themselves, but as policy instruments with which to connect sectors and priorities (such as gender, education, and disarmament).

## **Cities as actors of armed violence prevention and reduction**

In urban areas, cities and municipalities have a particular and essential role in preventing and reducing violence and insecurity, since they are the closest to the populations most affected. Successful AVRPP policies are those based on a multi-agency and multi-sectoral cooperation, which promote social inclusion and participation, e.g. via innovative outreach and awareness-raising (such as through culture, art, and sport) and the requalification of urban spaces.

Sharing of information at the local, national, and regional level is crucial to informing decision-makers about best practices. The development of AVRPP strategies, however, should draw upon the context-specific nature of urban violence. And as a rule of thumb, for all types of armed violence, contextual analysis based on statistics, other evidence, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical to assessing the impact of local policies, and to adapting approaches when necessary to ensure that their programming is successful.

## **Youth as change factor**

Globally, youth are disproportionately affected by violence: 90 per cent of perpetrators are 29 years of age or younger. They are also the most common victims of homicides. Youth violence spreads unevenly across the world, however; rates of youth homicide vary by seven times across countries within Europe.

The session on youth and violence stressed the importance of strong contextual analysis in order to understand more thoroughly the root causes of youth violence and, accordingly, to prevent young people from resorting to violence. Such an analytical framework should explore: the risk factors; paths chosen (e.g. joining a gang or not); and the main factors influencing these choices. Such questions are essential to developing appropriate responses. The analysis should then be used to elaborate a clear theory of change as a foundation for interventions. This session highlighted the importance of addressing risk factors that facilitate the spread of violence among youth.

Policy and programme focusing on youth should: engage young people in programme design, monitoring, and evaluation; apply peer-to-peer approaches; reduce stigmatization; show young people in a positive light (depicting their capacities and visions); reach out to them via alternative means (such as sport and music); and provide them with economic opportunities and skills development.

## **Working with victims and survivors of armed violence**

The topic of 'survivors' of armed violence extends broadly across societies recovering from conflict and to those suffering from other forms of violence, including armed crime and domestic violence. More attention needs to be paid to this issue, such as a better understanding not only of who the survivors are (including their families and communities), but also of the consequences borne over time, such as the downward economic spiral of families of survivors.

More funding is required for the various needs of survivors; regional and global funds would be especially helpful. Survivors of certain categories, particularly in post-conflict settings, require care according to their type of injury and perpetrator. The goal, however, should be providing

non-discriminatory and inclusive services to all survivors and their relatives. Small arms control and management prevails as one of the main ‘good practices’ in reducing the number of victims.

Internal social and political pressures may affect the ability of States to manage this issue effectively. Regional and international principles, processes, and funds can provide the frameworks that legitimize national action. In time, survivors can become prominent advocates for better policies on AVRP strategies.

### **Engaging the private sector in armed violence reduction and prevention and development**

The private sector has a positive, critical role to play in AVRP. It contributes to overall wealth by providing jobs and securing livelihoods. At the same time, businesses and their personnel may be targets of political, social, environmental pressures, and criticism, as well as of military, armed, or criminal groups. European evidence shows that businesses in the region are targeted by criminal actions twice as often as individuals are. Such targeting can hinder development significantly, as it inhibits and distorts the economic investment made by the private sector and is very costly. On the other hand, in protecting themselves against insecurity and in the pursuit of short-term profit, businesses can become involved with or linked to human rights abuses.

International companies working in difficult environments require a deep understanding of the given context, to avoid doing harm. A better outreach to the private sector about the social and economic context in which they operate and their impact on the local setting, would increase the chances of enterprises engaging in improving community security. Multi-stakeholder initiatives—such as the adoption of an international code of conduct or of oversight mechanisms that identify and mitigate human rights abuses—may help alleviate the risks incurred by private companies.

Initiatives that build on dialogue and partnerships among the private sector and other relevant actors (such as the state and civil society) can help address certain key risk factors related to violence in a given setting (e.g. providing jobs for groups at risk, such as marginalized youth or demobilized combatants). Furthermore, such initiatives can contribute to the stability of the whole area and, while this may increase operating costs for the business, it can generate sustainability and longer-term profits.

### **Controlling the tools of violence**

National Commissions for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) play an important role in weapons control and in AVRP. Despite varying degrees of success, several countries in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia still lack adequate coordination among the entities bearing responsibilities regarding small arms and light weapons.

National strategies and action plans can enable states to assess how best to promote SALW control. In these policies, key components and functional areas should be addressed, such as the possession and proliferation of firearms, as well as issues pertaining to celebratory shootings, e.g. fireworks and miscellaneous pyrotechnics. Strategies should be formed in the context of the given country’s gun culture and the realistic effects expected on violence prevention and security. The impact of control initiatives for small arms and light weapons is not adequately

understood, making it more difficult to bring them to the political agenda, especially in countries in which such control measures are not deemed a priority.

On a positive note, there have been successes in securing and registering the legal holdings of firearms. Electronic registers of legal weapons introduced in several countries in the region have been effective. The next step will be linking these registers regionally. Other positive experiences include strengthening cooperation among national commissions on small arms and light weapons, and licensing officials to harmonize arms export and import controls.

The session highlighted the significance of harmonizing national legislations on firearms and ammunition and including relevant UN and EU legal instruments therein. This harmonization will serve to map the trafficking routes of illegal small arms and to strengthen regional cooperation so as to tackle this trafficking. Similarly, relevant risk assessments need to be developed, especially regarding unplanned explosions at munitions sites. As the preparations continue for the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and while awaiting entry into force, this work will also contribute towards AVRPA nationally, regionally, and globally.

### **The role of diaspora groups for the reduction and prevention of armed violence**

Diaspora communities, which can serve as change-makers and networkers, may bear skill-sets that traverse national boundaries. These communities often take part in development, investing in projects or economic activities in their home countries, towns, or villages. In addition to remittances, their capacities, skills, and relationships can be important drivers in promoting peace.

To effectively channel the visions and capacities of diasporas, they need to become engaged as partners and to be recognized as such. Over time, diasporas assimilate the values of their host countries and, by the second or third generation, they can be key actors for integration. In particular, training and capacity-building for young people within the diaspora would be valuable.

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The organizers of the conference thank the participants and speakers for their contributions and wish success to the organizers and attendees of the next regional discussions. The next conferences are to be held in the Philippines, Morocco, and Kenya over the next few months.

#### **For more information:**

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