



## Regional Review Conference for Asia and the Pacific on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

8–9 October 2014, Manila, the Philippines

*“Ending armed violence for peace and development”*

### Chair’s Summary

Manila, Philippines and Geneva, Switzerland, 10 October 2014 - The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development Regional Review Conference (RRC) held in Manila, the Philippines, on 8 and 9 October 2014, brought together more than 120 participants from Asia and the Pacific regions, including representatives from governments, regional organisations, UN agencies, and civil society. Participants discussed how measurable reductions in armed violence and improved development can be reached, regionally and globally, both in conflict situations and in contexts of insecurity. They also reflected on how armed violence can be prevented in regions suffering from climate change, such as small island states.

The regional conference underlined that human security impacts on development gains but also stressed that unsustainable forms of ‘development’ and irresponsible resource extraction may contribute to insecurity and violence. The event further recognized that areas afflicted by armed conflict and violence remain consistently low on the human development indexes.

Armed conflict, violence, and insecurity affect both Asia and the Pacific despite their diversity. In Asia, armed conflict takes place mostly at the sub-national level in border regions, not only in areas considered as fragile but also in established democracies. In the Pacific, while firearm violence is widespread, other factors such as climate change can be drivers of insecurity and violence. Impunity and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons were considered as two additional vectors of conflict, violence, and insecurity.

The event stressed that military solutions, in situations of armed conflict, are not sustainable in the long term as they don’t address the root causes of conflict. Hence solutions need to be found through a comprehensive strategy that addresses the reform of security and justice institutions; that involves all stakeholders; that provides a reduction in the availability of weapons; that offers socio-economic incentives; and that invests in

preventative measures that consider people's identity, their political and economic participation, and the role of the state. Interventions should focus on the affected populations, with specific attention to victims and survivors, addressing the trauma caused by armed violence.

The conference further called for raising the prevention of violence on the policy agenda. Participants called for 'champions' of the armed violence reduction and prevention (AVRP) agenda to be more visible at all levels.

The event further highlighted the importance of a culture of peace, and education about peace. Participants stressed the importance of including both men and women when addressing armed violence and conflict. While it specific attention should be paid to the presence and capacities of women and youth, effective solutions to insecurity and violence need to be based on principles of dignity for all, recognition, inclusion, participation, accountability, and the fight against impunity. In countries that have not adhered to the Geneva Declaration, civil society can effectively support the armed violence reduction agenda. Furthermore, local authorities, local leaders and the private sector should play a more conscious and active role in preventing violence.

Long-term partnerships and regional cooperation, among affected countries— as well as with donor countries and regional organizations—are seen as an effective approach to sharing experience and strengthening national and local capacities to prevent and reduce armed violence.

In particular, the following messages and, more generally, a vision towards an 'AVRP approach' emerged from the presentations and debates:

#### **The use of data is central to developing solutions and measuring results**

The session highlighted the importance of collecting data on security and violence to support the formulation of integrated public policies and programmes.

Data collection should be supported by a common measurement and monitoring system shared among the different actors (from government and civil society) and those sectors involved in the formulation and implementation of AVRP policies. The system should integrate existing relevant data and information from different sources, but should also collect new data when needed, especially on development indicators and on drivers of violence such as the proliferation, ownership, and use of weapons. The data collection system should consider the value of data disaggregation, validity, verification, and harmonization. More importantly, it should place the affected individuals and communities at its centre to ensure that the collection of data and information becomes part of the victims' healing process and that 'no one is left behind'.

#### **The participation of women, youth, and local communities is fundamental role for building peace, fostering dialogue and security, and preventing violence.**

The conference highlighted the fact that it is important to connect the women, peace and security (WPS) discourse to the disarmament and AVRP agendas, especially with relation to small arms-related policies. The participants stressed that AVRP interventions should be inclusive and should ensure the participation of both men and women, from the level of

community to policy-making. Women have unique perspectives that should be brought to the public sphere, making women active agents of change and not only beneficiaries of programmes. UNSCR 1325 can be a useful platform towards this objective.

The session also considered that National Action Plans (NAPs) add value by strengthening the involvement of women in peace mechanisms as well as by connecting sectors and actors involved in conflict mitigation and AVRPs. Participants recommended that the WPS discourse and norms should be expanded: to reach wider audiences through media and education, especially by promoting positive masculinities; to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data; and to mainstream gender perspectives in the security sector's policies and practices.

Participants stressed the importance of understanding the local context and the root causes of armed violence. They noted with concern the increasing attractiveness of radical movements to disaffected youth, agreeing that the quest for identity and socio-economic marginalization can be strong drivers of youth-related radicalization and violence.

Based on examples from India, the Pacific, and the Philippines, the Regional Conference underscored the need for strengthened capacities of local actors, including communities, indigenous groups, and family, to develop appropriate approaches for the mediation of local conflicts and the reduction of the risk of youth involvement in violence. However, these local approaches need to be supported by state institutions and guided by a vision of a more just local development.

### **Security and justice providers play a central role for peace and development**

Accountable law enforcement and security forces can contribute to the reduction of violence and to the development of a climate of trust by the population. The experience of the Philippines, and its shift towards a policy of 'winning peace' can be a source of inspiration for other countries affected by armed conflict and high levels of armed violence.

The main pillars of this approach are: a shared vision of security, based on the consultation and the participation of stakeholders from government, civil society, and local communities; clarity and 'ownership' of the respective roles of the various actors involved; and a "whole-of-nation" approach that integrates transparency, accountability, and sustainable development programming, , and that provides the necessary resources and capacities to implement the strategies.

### **The role of media in AVRPs and development**

Media can play an important role in situations of conflict and violence. They are a source of information and analysis. The manner in which they report on the situation, and the narrative they use, have an influence on the population's perception of (in)security and their understanding of the conflict and its causes. Conflict-sensitivity and skills in reporting about small arms can improve the quality of media coverage of situations involving violence and insecurity.

## The region shows that a better firearms control brings about measurable reductions of violence

The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons are considered as priority issues in the Philippines and elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific, and should be given specific policy attention. Participants considered the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA) as well as the ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as promising better control measures against irresponsible transfers of arms.

The regulatory framework in itself is not enough to bring an effective response to the challenge posed by widespread availability of firearms. It is necessary to correctly register, document, and account for firearms, as well as to coordinate efforts by state law-enforcement agencies, and enforce the regulatory framework. However, the region has also shown that more radical solution such as gun bans can be effective interventions leading to a measureable reduction of armed violence.

## Providing clear priorities for peace and armed violence reduction within the post-2015 agenda

Participants shared the view that armed violence and development are two sides of the same coin. Armed violence not only has impacts on development, but socio-economic development can play a role—both positive and negative—on the risk of violence. Uneven development can have very negative impacts, especially on indigenous peoples and other marginalized populations. The absence of armed violence is necessary to achieve development, but it is not sufficient in itself. There is also a strong need to prevent armed violence.

Given the links between insecurity, armed violence, and development it is important that the development framework that will follow the Millennium Development Goals includes a goal on peace, with associated relevant targets. In his conclusive remarks, Assistant Secretary Jesus Domingo reminded the conference about the critical moment that the year 2015 represents. The inter-state negotiations on the new development framework provide the opportunity to realize what the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has been set up for: to link the disarmament and development processes in a meaningful manner. The conference ended with a call for states and civil society to support the meaningful inclusion of peace, justice, and AVRP in the post-2015 agenda.

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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 Morocco and Kenya in October and November.

For more information:

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