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DECLARATION**



Regional Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

26 - 27 November 2014 | Nairobi, Kenya

Ending armed violence for peace and development

Chair's Summary

The Government of Kenya and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland and the Secretariat of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (GD) convened in Nairobi on 26–27 November 2014, a Regional Review Conference to discuss how to affect measurable reductions in armed violence, and improve development, both in the Sub-Saharan Africa region and globally. The event brought together more than 140 participants from 30 countries, regional organizations, United Nations agencies, and civil society.

After a period of hope, with many conflicts in the Sub-Saharan region coming to an end, investment in education, strengthening of democratic systems and parallel economic development, the region is witnessing a new phase of armed conflicts and violence. Existing fault lines include elites' competition for power; struggles over natural resources (especially competition for resources like water, grazing land, and mineral resources); socio-economic inequalities; and inadequacies of basic services, and security and justice institutions. These fuel deep-rooted grievances and unrest. In addition, recent dimensions such as religious fundamentalism, rapid and unplanned urbanization, climate change, and transnational organized crime are creating new dynamics that compound armed violence across the continent.

The conference underlined the fact that, while lack of development may be a risk factor for violence, development gains allow for security expenditures by states and communities to be reallocated as investment in education and in priority sectors of the economy. In considering the nexus between development and armed violence, conference participants emphasized the importance of putting people and their needs at the center of both development and security strategies.

The debates on the solutions to armed violence showed a large consensus on the need for multi-sector, multi-actor responses and policies that go beyond the use of force. In particular, the conference highlighted the importance of dialogue and cooperation with all forces of society but especially with women and youth as engines of change. The conference further underlined the need for specific attention to border regions and to urban areas; for increased regional and sub-regional cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking of small arms and financial flows; for a strengthened role of local actors and municipalities; and for improved access to fair, effective and accountable justice and security systems.

The plenary and parallel session at the conference further discussed the following themes:

Providing clear priorities for the post- 2015 development agenda

The participants considered the many impacts of armed violence on people's security and highlighted that without security, development cannot take place. The ongoing process of interstate negotiations on the framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals provides an opportunity to redefine global development priorities for the years to come. For this reason, positive peace, security, and justice need to be at the core of development processes both at the national and international level, thereby giving states and international donors a mandate to invest in these issues.

The discussion showed that clear progress has been achieved in the capacity of national statistical offices and research institutions to measure peace and governance, while concerns of some countries on the issue of measurability still need consideration. Referring to the Common African Position (CAP) of the African Union Commission, many speakers and participants called for placing the needs of people at the center, and for the inclusion of peace and security as a goal in the new Post-2015 Development Agenda. Therefore, relevant information and clear messages should be sent from national capitals to Missions in New York in order to support the preservation of Goal 16 and the dialogue about its targets.

Security and justice institutions, a pillar for peace and development

Over the years the notion of security has changed, moving from the security of the state to the security of the people living in a country. In this framework, justice and security institutions were considered as central not only for armed violence reduction and prevention (AVRP) interventions but also for development in general. Participants underscored that lack of security and justice are impediments to development and cost a great deal to governments

and to business (for example 7–11% of the annual national revenue in Kenya is spent on private security).

Speakers stressed that the protection of the right to life is a key responsibility of the state. However, the way in which state security and justice institutions operate and, especially, their use of force can exacerbate tense situations. For this reason, police accountability and impunity are important issues to consider also from an AVRIP perspective. Reforming the justice and security sectors were considered as priority issues. In this process, it is important also to focus on the roles and linkages between state and non-state security and justice providers.

“Security for whom?” The role of private security providers

Private security providers (PSPs) play an important role in the region, not only as employers (often giving work to more personnel than public providers) but also in their contribution to improving the security situation of communities and individuals. In situations where state institutions are stronger, the state sometimes delegates part of its mandate in providing security to private actors. In situations where state institutions are weaker, PSPs can play an important, stabilizing role (for example, absorbing many former combatants or protecting key economic infrastructure).

However, the use of private security also has its challenges. In fragile situations, for instance, the over-reliance on PSPs (also by international donors) risks to further weaken state providers. By protecting economic and political elites only, there is a risk of creating two classes of citizens. Sometimes PSPs mimic state forces (similar uniforms and structures), thus bringing confusion in the minds of the public. Access to and use of firearms by private security actors need to be better regulated. Participants agreed that firearms should not be distributed to all PSP staff but only to specialized operatives that need it for the accomplishment of their duties.

The discussions highlighted that in all situations there is a need for a clear framework where PSPs and state security can collaborate, with clear coordination, reporting procedures, and checks and balances.

Armed violence is gendered, the solutions too

Armed violence is gendered: young men are often the perpetrators and victims. Women and girls are mostly the direct victims and survivors of armed violence but also of domestic and intimate partner violence. While providing for the needs of women is a first step,

interventions need to ensure that women participate both in their development and implementation.

At the national level, participants supported an increased role of women in all efforts to promote disarmament and arms control across all operational levels.

AVRP interventions should play a critical role in changing attitudes and practices about the acceptance of violence as well as the needs for acquiring a firearm or the social norms that perpetuate violence against women. Such initiatives should involve boys and girls, men and women. At the same time, coordinating and harmonizing the implementation of the National Action Plans on SCR 1325 with other relevant policies dealing with insecurity and small arms would improve the inclusion of women in all relevant sectors and interventions.

A call for better controlling the weapons of violence

The conference identified the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) as a challenge to peace, security and development. In Africa, the proliferation of SALWs is not only a driver of protracted conflict (SALW's are a weapon of 'choice') but also a threat to security during election times or even in the domestic sphere, and are a risk factor for increased gender-based violence. This issue was an important thread through many of the sessions of the conference.

Making progress in reducing the impact of armed violence will require multi-faceted and inclusive initiatives at all levels. The conference encouraged governments to ensure the implementation of commitments that they have made globally (e.g. Security Council Resolution 1325 and related SALW instruments, such as, the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects), and called for adherence to and ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. The Conference also identified the need for an increased security and border cooperation among the States of the region (for example, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda).

The manufacture and transfer of weapons is a growing industry in Africa. Stronger national controls are needed governing civilian access to weapons. Baseline data on SALW is still lacking in a number of African states. Sound information will inform national action plans on small arms control and legislation development.

Although efforts have been undertaken at regional (through the Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons of 2000, the SADC Protocol on Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials of 2001, and the 2006 ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons) and national levels to develop appropriate and coherent

legislation and regulatory frameworks to set standards and increase transparency in the process of transfers and acquisition. Corruption is a serious concern in their implementation (especially for weapons marking, certification of gun ownership, and transfers). Finally, the participants identified the need for strengthened capacities to manage weapons and ammunition in state stockpiles, so as to reduce the risk of leakages and diversion, and avoid unplanned explosions at munition sites.

The importance of data for policy and programming

The sessions at the conference stressed the key role of credible, reliable and gender-disaggregated security information and local development indicators for the elaboration of solutions to armed violence. In sensitive contexts, operating without relevant information (real time and user-friendly) can lead to supporting interventions having unintended negative impacts. Experiences from Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Somalia, and South Africa show that violence and crime monitoring systems (or observatories) can play an important role in AVRIP. Data quality; regular, timely release of data and analysis; and special attention to data dissemination (tailored to its users) can help in increasing awareness on the risks and impacts of armed violence in the region.

Violence is not equally distributed in affected countries and is driven by complex drivers. Many gaps in data on violence—and especially on firearms—still exist. Local observatories can shed light on the characteristics of violence and its trends, but policy makers need the political will and capacities to act on their findings. Long-term engagement, access to data, participation of stakeholders, sound research methodology, neutrality, and multi-year funding are seen by participants as elements for the success of observatories.

Working with victims and survivors of armed violence

A legacy of armed violence's reality is the indelible scars it leaves on the lives of individuals and communities, recovery and prevention is a critical area for attention. Participants discussed the need for multi-stakeholder policies and interventions that go beyond meeting the physical needs of victims and survivors (including affected communities). Reparations for victims and "non-criminal accountability methods" (such as traditional justice approaches) are often complicated by limited resources and an overlap and blurring between the identities of the "victims" and the "perpetrators". In implementing such interventions, reliance solely on international donors is not sustainable, and states need to recognize their responsibility for assistance for victims and survivors of armed violence.

“Just cities are safer cities”: strengthening the role of cities for AVRP

Improving the safety and security of citizens in urban settings is not only a matter of putting in place specific security policies, but also requires better urban planning, infrastructure, public spaces and lighting, communal services, urban management, and urban governance. At the international policy level, the new post-2015 development agenda will, hopefully, better define the role of cities in terms of AVRP.

Participants welcomed the opportunity to share practices and programming experiences, expressing interest in extending the discussion to include more cities around the world, to better articulate the role of urban actors in improving urban security. In particular, the conference discussed the urban context as often being ideally placed for linking data collection to AVRP programmes. It singled out programmes to support urban youth, and to lift them from poverty through provision of skills and spaces for expression, as especially valuable, as well as experiences of implementing “gun free zones” (GFZ) as a direct intervention aiming to reduce armed violence. A critical requirement for these approaches is sustainable capacities and resources to implement them over time.

Empowering youth to be agents of positive change

About 65% of African population is under the age of 35. UNICEF estimates that by 2050, the African youth population under 18 years will increase by a further two-thirds. These demographic shifts need to be taken into account in policy-making and national development plans in order to allow youth to play a role bringing positive change in society.

Youth can also be at the center of violence, and participants noted with concern the increasing attractiveness of radical movements to disaffected youth. The conference called for states to work on the causes of violence, stressing that meaningful participation in policy processes, development of a culture of peace, quality education and skills-building, and economic opportunities are all important factors for AVRP.

Community ownership and participation are fundamental to AVRP interventions

The importance of involving affected communities and social groups in the development and implementation of policies and interventions was stressed by conference participants. The conference welcomed the many efforts that have been made to implement concrete policies and intervention, calling states and donors to continue to increase their engagement in sustainable solutions to armed violence. While many suggested building on local culture and traditions to address the risk of armed violence, many others called for

complementing such interventions with multi-sectoral, multi-actor interventions in which accountable government institutions play a key role. The conference also highlighted the important role that local actors and authorities can play in implementing relevant national policies and instruments. Two recurrent themes throughout the conference were that it is important to be able to work across borders, and that it is necessary to consider the supply, the availability, and the factors that influence demand for firearms.

The organizers of the conference thank the participants and speakers for their contributions.

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