

**Opening remarks for Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator**  
**At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration**  
**on Armed Violence and Development in Geneva, Switzerland**  
**31 October 2011**

I am pleased to be here today to participate in this important Ministerial Conference.

I commend all the signatories to the Geneva Declaration for their political leadership in addressing our world's unacceptably high levels of armed violence. I also acknowledge sister UN organizations, the World Bank, the OECD, the International Red Cross Movement, and numerous other non-governmental organizations for their strong commitment to this issue. Now is the time to strengthen the coalition of the committed, and act decisively to reduce armed violence.

This gathering is a unique opportunity for us, as leaders, practitioners, and policy makers to re-commit to the objectives of the Geneva Declaration – it and this conference are platforms for action.

The messages of this year's World Development Report, the OECD's studies on armed violence, and the MDG review process are clear. The cycle of violence and poor governance needs to be broken for sustainable and inclusive development to be achieved.

UNDP reaffirms its unwavering commitment to assist member states to tackle armed violence. This is a development imperative and a goal at the very heart of the Geneva Declaration and the Oslo Commitments.

Armed violence jeopardizes development, it stifles economic growth, and it often undermines legitimate governments. It increases the cost of law enforcement and of health care. It imposes economic burdens on countries which can ill afford them.

The World Bank has estimated that in Central America alone, the total cost of insecurity in 2006 was some \$6.5 billion dollars.<sup>1</sup> In Guatemala for example, the cost of armed violence to the health sector, institutions, and in private security expenditure, impact on the investment climate, and material losses was estimated to be equivalent to 7.3 per cent of its GDP in 2005, far outstripping spending on health or education.

Armed violence is everyone's problem. It is not limited to inter- or intra-state armed conflict. It also occurs in developed and developing countries where poverty, inequality, social and political exclusion, and governance challenges are both causes and consequences of armed violence. Out of the 526,000 people who die as a result of armed violence every year, more than three-quarters of them are in non-conflict settings – if we can call them that! This year's report on the Global Burden of Armed Violence tells us that one-quarter of all violent deaths occur in just fourteen countries. Six out of the top seven countries are in

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Report, Crime and Development in Central America, 2011, P. 7 This estimate includes health costs, institutional costs, private security costs and material costs. The Report on Central America does not include Belize and Panama:  
[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/FINAL\\_VOLUME\\_I\\_ENGLISH\\_CrimeAndViolence.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAC/Resources/FINAL_VOLUME_I_ENGLISH_CrimeAndViolence.pdf)

the Americas. The probability of young Latin Americans becoming homicide victims is seventy times higher than in countries like Japan, the UK or Hungary. In El Salvador, the risk of violent death is higher than that in Iraq.

Armed violence is often accompanied by gender-based sexual violence. In post-conflict settings, the level of stress combined with the availability of small arms leads to a rise in violence within established relationships. In non-conflict settings, research shows that women are more likely to be attacked by a partner if a gun is available, which highlights the importance of gun control.

For, as news media reports remind us on a daily basis, criminal violence is as lethal as violence related to armed conflict. The widespread availability of small arms also increases the likelihood of armed violence in post-conflict countries and in countries with high levels of organized crime.

Beyond the facts and figures, the primary impact of armed violence is the toll it takes on human lives. In May, I visited the city of Osh in Southern Kyrgyzstan, where inter-ethnic violence erupted last year. It is for communities like these and their counterparts around the world that we must put reducing armed violence at the centre of the development agenda.

The success of the Geneva Declaration will be judged by its results on the ground. In UNDP, our particular strength is in taking the Armed Violence Reduction agenda forward in our programming in the field. That is where we play our part in breaking the cycle of armed violence and creating virtuous cycles of peace, prosperity, and development.

The experience we gain through our work in the field, feeds into our contributions to global policy making and our advocacy for reduction of armed violence.

At the global level, UNDP has been working with development partners to integrate armed violence reduction into broader development programming. We believe that a narrow focus on armed violence per se will not yield results, and that it is critical to understand and address the root causes of armed violence from broader socio-economic and development perspectives.

Our ‘armed violence prevention’ approach brings together actors including police, local government, communities, development practitioners, and public service providers to find innovative solutions based on needs and realities on the ground.

We also focus on the gender dimensions of violence, and on how armed violence affects men, women, boys, and girls differently.

A package of interventions to help prevent armed violence can include measures like making the criminal justice sector more effective; supporting local dispute resolution mechanisms; creating opportunities

to work and generate income; and making government more accountable and responsive to its citizens.

Such packages of interventions will be effective if governments, neighborhood groups, civil society organizations, the Red Cross movement and NGOs, and private sector partners work together with bilateral and multilateral partners to reduce armed violence.

UNDP's experience suggests that combinations of bottom-up and top-down interventions are most likely to succeed. In El Salvador, for example, UNDP has been working with the government to strengthen the legal framework, while also supporting local citizen security measures at the municipal level. Some municipalities there have seen a forty per cent reduction in homicide rates.

Local ownership is important during the design and implementation of armed violence reduction programmes. In Guatemala where homicide rates and abuse of women have reached extreme levels, UNDP works to

empower local leaders to develop plans for their communities to improve citizen security.

Such plans can include banning firearms from public places, restricting the availability of alcohol, improving street lighting, and working to improve community-based policing.

But let me emphasize that it is critical to link local interventions to broader development support - including to establishing the firm rule of law and building better and stronger governance institutions.

Effective rule of law institutions help the fight against crime, provide protection to citizens, and reinforce the social contract. An effective criminal justice system should also have a deterrent effect and reduce the likelihood of perpetrators re-offending – thus preventing cycles of armed violence.

It is also true that effective rule of law institutions help to enable the environment required for economic recovery. That is why UNDP works intensively on strengthening the rule of law in 25 conflict-affected countries – focusing on both justice and security.

From Burundi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, to Kosovo, Haiti, and Colombia, UNDP is focusing on supporting effective judicial and police services with the infrastructure, equipment, and technical support they need. In Sierra Leone, we supported the court system – one outcome was an increased number of convictions for sexual violence-related crimes.

Overall UNDP's experience suggests the right mix of institutional reforms and accountable government with strong community level engagement is a key ingredient for reducing violence and crime. As well, however, the overall sustainable development of a country needs to accompany these efforts.

That means sound long-term macro-economic management and investment in health and education are important. Inclusive, good quality opportunities for work and income generation are needed.

The countries which have made remarkable transitions away from conflict have experiences which can be shared to help reduce conflict elsewhere and promote more sustainable forms of development.

Countries facing high rates of armed violence in non-conflict settings can draw on a wealth of experience of interventions which have helped reduce those rates elsewhere. I expect that government representatives, multilateral partners, civil society organizations, and development practitioners will share these experiences at this conference.

UNDP will continue to play its part in supporting governments and communities to reduce levels of armed violence, and bring relief to the men, women and children who currently suffer the consequences.

Draft as of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011 @ 1.45 hrs

Now, I introduce to you a video clip from a prominent Ivorian, who was recently appointed a member of Côte d'Ivoire's Truth, Reconciliation and Dialogue Commission to support his country's efforts to heal the wounds of painful conflict. He is Didier Drogba, famous footballer and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, and he is playing an active part in his country's reconstruction process

Let's watch Didier's message now:

[Video Address by Didier Drogba is played]

Armed violence comes in many forms, in times of conflict and in times of supposed peace. It affects developing as well as developed countries. Let us be guided by the words of Didier Drogba and his call for action, and let us work towards a strong Outcome Document from this conference – and translate it into action.