



GENEVA DECLARATION ON ARMED VIOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Second Ministerial Review Conference

Statement by Ms Ruth Stone

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I would like to take this opportunity to firstly thank the Swiss Government for hosting this Review Conference and for its tireless work in the global fight against the pernicious impact of armed violence.

Australia is a committed global partner in efforts to reduce armed violence and the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons. Australia thanks the Swiss Government for their leadership of several initiatives, not least of which is the coordination of the Geneva Declaration.

Australia would also like to thank the UNDP for its continued leadership of various international armed violence reduction initiatives through the Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Recovery and their country offices.

There has been much progress in the Pacific and internationally since the last Geneva Declaration Review Conference. The Meeting of Government Experts held under the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA), so ably chaired by New Zealand, served as a useful technical meeting for states looking to address an important element of combating illicit small arms: while focusing on tracking and tracing, it also addressed cross cutting themes of national frameworks, regional cooperation, and international cooperation and capacity building. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has successfully completed three Preparatory Committees, and the current Chair's draft of prospective treaty elements provides a strong basis for ongoing discussions.

As one of the first countries to sign up to the Declaration in June 2006, Australia has been a strong supporter of the Geneva Declaration. We have followed with interest the encouraging expansion of the Declaration's membership since then, and are particularly pleased to note the growing membership from the Asia-Pacific region.

Preventing instability in the Asia-Pacific region and globally is an on-going foreign policy priority for Australia. Like many members, Australia considers that there is a pressing need to reduce armed violence, stop the trade in illicit small arms and light weapons, and address the negative impacts that these inflict on social, economic and human development.

Australia takes a practical approach in supporting our partner countries' efforts to reduce armed violence, focusing on programs that build sustainable government institutions, improve service delivery, and strengthen the rule of law and community capacities to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence.

Through our aid program, for example, Australia is supporting security sector reform and efforts in the Asia-Pacific region to combat small arms proliferation. Australia is actively assisting Timor Leste in its recovery following conflict. We are supporting policing, legal, judicial and penal systems in Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Cambodia, and assisting the upgrade of armoury facilities in Tuvalu and PNG.

In Solomon Islands, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) removed 3,600 guns and 300,000 rounds of ammunition from the community under a 21-day firearms amnesty. In total, almost 4,000 firearms have now been removed from the community.

Australian experience in Solomon Islands and East Timor has highlighted the central role development assistance can play in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and stability, both regionally and globally.

As reiterated at the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Monrovia this year, Australia is committed to supporting country-led peacebuilding and statebuilding processes, and helping to establish and strengthen basic safety and security as a key enabler for development.

Australia is working to boost the profile of frameworks combating armed violence frameworks in the Pacific, including encouraging knowledge sharing between small island Caribbean countries and Pacific island country partners. Australia has contributed to sponsorship funds for attendance at the UNPoA Biennial Meeting of States in 2010 and the Meeting of Government Experts in 2011, and recently supported 18 government and civil society representatives to attend the ATT Preparatory Committee in July.

In partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum and Oxfam Australia, Australia will host a Pacific Regional Workshop in 2012 to develop a common regional position on the ATT and raise awareness and support for the UNPoA. These initiatives facilitate the participation of the Pacific region in global efforts to reduce armed violence.

Australia will also support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its national programme for the destruction and marking of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Australian assistance will help in: marking small arms held by defence and security forces; collection and destruction of illicit small arms; as well as training on marking, stockpile management and destruction of illicit small arms.

In line with Australia's policy, we are pleased to see the inclusion of monitoring, measurability, analysis and effectiveness in our discussions on reducing armed violence globally. This approach will assist in ensuring all donors' contributions are effectively and efficiently used to address the issue at hand.

We also support continued inclusion of women, peace and security in our discussions. Australia has recently appointed a Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, to ensure that

women and gender issues are better represented in international frameworks and development programming.

The Ambassador's priorities include co-ordinating and promoting Australia's work to eradicate violence against women, improving access to services for women, improving protection of women and girls in conflict zones, and increasing the representation of women in leadership roles including after conflict.

Australia's experience has shown that development spending is more effective when women are central to our investment, and this is certainly true of efforts in armed violence reduction.

Australia would like to highlight the shared transnational challenge of armed violence.

Due to the transnational nature of armed conflict and violent crime it is incumbent on all governments, regardless of their level of development, to work domestically and with international partners to reduce the impact of armed violence. The old saying that "a problem shared is a problem halved" is a useful principle to guide us in discussions this week.

While it may be difficult to halve the impact of armed violence the best approach to tackling global challenges, as we have seen time and time again, is to work together to coordinate and focus our efforts.

This Review Conference is an important step towards this goal and we look forward to working constructively with members throughout the Conference.