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**Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development
Second Ministerial Conference**

31 October 2011

Statement by

Ambassador Christian Strohal

**Permanent Representative of Austria
To the United Nations in Geneva**

Chair,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Swiss government and UNDP on convening the Second Ministerial Conference on the "Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development" here in Geneva.

This diplomatic initiative has already proved highly valuable in increasing our understanding of the complex links between armed violence and development, armed violence being both a cause and a consequence of underdevelopment.

Austria strongly supports the comprehensive approach promoted by the Geneva Declaration that integrates armed violence reduction and prevention in security and development strategies at all levels, emphasizes local ownership and regional cooperation as well as public-private partnerships, and puts particular focus on some key factors that are also at the heart of the Austrian policy framework for security and development. On this occasion, let me highlight a few Austrian priorities that we believe are crucial to the success of any effective response to the complex challenge of armed violence.

Austria commends and supports trans-national programs and initiatives in different regions of the world that have been developed with the aim to effectively combat illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of armed violence on women and children. We believe that concerted efforts have to be taken in order to ensure women's and children's protection from armed violence, including awareness-raising of their specific vulnerability. In this respect, we believe that journalists can play an important role by drawing attention to incidents of armed violence.

Austria has a longstanding commitment to the protection of those that are most vulnerable in situations of armed conflict. During her Security Council membership in 2009, Austria took forward Resolution 1894 on the Protection of Civilians – a strong text and an important contribution to the disarmament process, to which, however, member states have to live up to in order to make a real impact on the ground.

In line with Austria's continuous engagement on victim assistance in all fields of disarmament, I would like to highlight the importance of granting victims of armed violence their full rights. It is of crucial importance that states provide systems that guarantee adequate medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support to victims as well as provide for their full social and economic re-integration and inclusion. The notion of victims has to include affected individuals as well as affected families and communities.

Overall, Austria underlines the importance of respecting human rights and the rule of law in order to reduce and prevent armed violence. In this regard, we support any efforts to strengthen access to justice, while we believe that these still have to be scaled up.

We are convinced that this Review Conference provides us with a platform to reaffirm our joint support and commitment to the objectives laid down in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and to help practical measures and innovative approaches evolve, which have the potential to prevent and reduce armed violence around the globe.

Thank you.