The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana presents its compliments to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Multilateral Peace Policy Section) and, with reference to the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference on the Geneva Convention on Armed Violence and Development to be held in Geneva from 31st October to 1st November 2011, has the honour to attach herewith, a copy of the statement to be delivered by the Head of Ghana’s delegation, H. E. Ambassador Chris Kpodo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (Multilateral Peace Policy Section) the assurances of its highest consideration.

Accra, 25th October, 2011
STATEMENT BY

DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF GHANA
AMBASSADOR CHRIS KPODO

AT THE

SECOND MINISTERIAL REVIEW CONFERENCE ON
THE GENEVA DECLARATION ON ARMED VIOLENCE AND
DEVELOPMENT, GENEVA

31 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER, 2011
I appreciate the opportunity to join the distinguished speakers before me to congratulate the Government of Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for hosting this important review meeting and to express the deep appreciation of my delegation for the excellent organization and the warm hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Geneva.

Given the increasingly daunting challenge that armed violence poses to sustainable peace and development in our respective countries, it is most appropriate that we are gathered here today to review our individual, as well as collective progress towards reducing this menace in order to safeguard the process of our development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

I wish to recall that the last Ministerial Review Conference, held in September 2008, reaffirmed armed violence as a major impediment to sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. That Conference reiterated that practical measures aimed at preventing and reducing the negative impact of armed violence in development should be continued and intensified.

The theme for this second Review Conference; "reduce armed violence, enable development" is an emphatic recognition of the nexus between armed violence or conflict and development. That development can only be achieved in a
peaceful and stable environment. Ghana fully endorses this theme as it coincides with our own efforts to create such an enabling environment for our national development. We have accordingly, developed a number of strategies, including establishing the National Peace Council which has the responsibility, inter alia, to raise awareness relating to the use of non-violent strategies in response to conflict through networking, coordination and advocacy.

My delegation therefore comes to this Second Ministerial Review Conference on behalf of a national administration committed to a just and sustainable peace and a people-centred development, an administration that fully acknowledges the reality of armed violence in our societies and the imperative to harness all energies, both national and international, to fight the menace.

As a country whose Constitution imposes on us the responsibility to establish a just and free society where every Ghanaian would have the opportunity to live long, productive and meaningful lives we hold a strong conviction that every single life lost as a result of armed violence represents a setback to our national development agenda. To us, it does not make sense investing huge amounts of resources to develop our respective countries if we are losing the very people who are to benefit from these developments, through armed violence.

Our participation in this Review Meeting reaffirms our shared commitment to the Geneva Declaration on armed violence and our shared determination to
tackle the scourge of armed violence particularly in its relation to sustainable development, through collective and collaborative activity by all nations. We therefore appreciate the opportunity to share Ghana's experience with other participants here gathered.

Ghana's experience in armed conflicts and violence has been relatively limited and mild. However, recent developments in some parts of the country and sub-regional cross-border challenges point to the fact that there is the need to continue to intensify the fight against armed violence. Statistics from the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms on the incidences of armed violence from the Small Arms Data Capture Instrument, and from the Police Criminal Investigation Department, affirm that small arms still constitute the main instruments used in facilitating armed robbery and other violent crimes in the country. Such violent crimes are more prevalent in the urban areas and have become an increasing source of concern to government and the entire population.

With the recent discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Ghana and its attraction of more local and international investments, as well as social deviants including criminals, the need to proactively put in place appropriate mechanisms to control crime and violence remains a critical national priority.

Ghana indeed, views armed violence control as a crucial and essential requirement for effective and sustainable national development. The Government
of Ghana has therefore, in line with its "Better Ghana Agenda" development initiatives, taken steps, over the years, at the community and national levels, to introduce social intervention programmes to address youth unemployment, poverty, limited access to education, and the lack of or limited access to basic health care, among others considered as major drivers of armed violence in the country as a means to controlling armed violence.

These interventions include:

- Continuous public education and awareness raising by the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and the Ghana Police Service which have often been used to increase understanding of the risks and impacts of armed violence.

- The creation of the Community Policing Unit by the Ghana Police Service as a means of partnership where the police work together with the community to prevent and reduce crime in enhancing community safety. This initiative has resulted in increases in safety and security in communities, and improved trust and cooperation between the police, civil society and communities.

- Controlling circulation of tools of violence through various measures/programmes/projects, such as ban on the importation of
civilian arms to Ghana, periodic civilian weapon collection schemes and regular public weapon destruction programmes.

- Regular capacity building for the various implementing agencies, especially the security services. Periodic review and strengthening of administration of laws, rules and regulations governing possession and misuse of arms.

- Engaging local artisans/gunsmiths for dialogue and collaboration in the fight against illicit small arms and illegal local production of arms. It is also a means by which an alternative means of livelihood is discussed with these blacksmith for Government assistance to them as a further way to reduce locally-made tools of armed violence.

- Conducting research and baseline surveys for information on best practices and useful statistics/data, regarding armed violence.

- The promotion and use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) or peaceful conflict resolution in the settlement of disputes. This has enhanced access to justice by persons who are unable to go through the established court trial systems due to the affordability and flexibility of the process. The ADR option has also helped to reduce people's desire to own firearms to protect themselves, while promoting community conflict resolution.
- Prioritization of job creation to address, in particular, youth unemployment with the expected output of providing the youth with viable and sustainable livelihood opportunities which are perhaps the most common factors underlying youth exclusion and frustration that leads to violence. It is gratifying to note that since the commencement of the National Youth Employment Programme in 2007 over 108,000 unemployed youth have been recruited, trained and employed in 15 different employment modules. It is estimated that the programme would engage 400,000 youth by the end of 2013.

- The Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP) has also been initiated to focus on training the unemployed youth to acquire viable skills that will eventually make them self-employed with specialized hands-on training, within the shortest possible time in their localities. It is also an initiative to serve as an employment creation venture through the acquisition of vocational and entrepreneurial skills which is a key to ensuring opportunities for gainful employment and secure livelihood as a violence prevention strategy.

- The establishment of the Ghanaian Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Programme (LEAP) – as a social cash transfer programme
which provides cash and health insurance to extremely poor households across Ghana to alleviate short-term poverty, and encourage long term human capital development. Since its inception in 2008, an approximate 35,000 households across Ghana have benefited from an annual expenditure of approximately USD 11m.

- The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) initiative, seeks to reduce the level of those living in poverty to less than 20% by 2030 through enhanced economic activity. The SADA strategy makes peace and conflict avoidance a cardinal pre-condition for sustainable development in the area, especially since that area has seen flashes of armed conflicts.

In the wider sub-regional environment, Ghana has adopted the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials and is committed to honouring its obligations under the convention, especially with regard to reporting, transparency in information sharing and the development of a National Plan of Action.

I am glad to announce that these interventions have resulted in an appreciable reduction in armed violence incidents in Ghana. In fact, available information from the Ghana Police Service indicates that the first
half of this year witnessed an appreciable arms related crimes reduction of about eight per cent (8%) nationwide.

I however wish to concede that despite Ghana’s deliberate efforts and achievements in the reduction of armed violence, we still believe that our mission against this serious threat to humanity remains a continuing quest. We indeed, recognize the need for the sanctity of life in a society that observes the rule of law, including ensuring that every citizen lives in safety to achieve the fullest potential of his or her life and to make meaningful contribution to societal development. It is indeed, this recognition that motivated Ghana to become one of the first signatories to the Geneva Declaration.

Thus, while our collective quest to control armed violence in order to ensure development, may be a protracted and trying exercise, our unrelenting commitment and adoption of appropriate policies would ensure that it is an attainable one. It is in this spirit that Ghana is happy to share the vision and priorities outlined in the outcome document of this review conference, as a complement to the Millennium Development Goals, for the implementation of the Geneva Declaration by 2015.

Thank you.