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Statement by Ambassador Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal at the Second Ministerial Review Conference on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Geneva, October 31, 2011.

Mr. Chairman
Honorable Ministers
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the outset, I wish to express sincere appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for its leadership of the initiative in partnership with the UNDP. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, in five years of its existence has been able to build up a broad-based support with wider membership; and recognition as a noble effort for security, welfare and wellbeing of the humanity. We welcome the strong focus placed on the linkages between armed violence and underdevelopment, including poverty, economic deprivation and crime. The conference motto: 'Reduce armed violence; enable development' is timely and relevant. We express our full support to the conference theme and underline the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict rather than merely reflecting on the symptoms.

We are all aware of the destructive impact that the armed violence, both in conflict and non-conflict situations, leaves in societies and its socio-economic foundations. It destroys lives and livelihoods; breeds insecurity, fear and terror. It demeans the very fundamentals of human security and human dignity, and shatters hope, aspirations and innovative ingenuity. The enormous human, social and economic costs on states, communities and families and for recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction are irredeemable. The disruptive and destabilizing effects of armed violence on their basic socio-cultural fabric remain far beyond anybody's comprehension for times to come.

Armed violence is a menace in all countries irrespective of developmental level. The problem is more severe in places where poverty is pervasive and underdevelopment is structural, where employment opportunities are scarce and government institutions are weak and resource stricken. That 18 of the 48 least developed countries today are confronting armed violence of one kind or another establishes the existence of strong correlation between violence, deprivation and lack of development. According to World Bank's flagship report more than 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by violent conflict. And these are the places, to cite Prof. Paul Collier, 'plagued' by the recurrent cycles of weak governance, poverty, and violence. We need to keep in mind that not a single low-income country coping with these problems has yet achieved a single Millennium Development Goal. Worse, conflicts are often found recurring. According to the World Bank, 90 percent of the last decade's civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a civil war in the last 30 years.

The nexus of proliferation of small arms and light weapons, their production, transfer, acquisition, smuggling for economic benefit and falling into the hands of criminal groups and non-state actors have been serious killer of human lives. It is a matter of great concern that global military expenditure stands at 1.5 trillion dollar whereas the official development assistance worldwide barely amounts to 100 billion dollar. The role of ODA is crucial in meeting development goals, but the commitment target of 0.7 % of GNI remains unmet. Studies reveal that for every dollar spent on conflict prevention, the international community could save on average four times more.

Peace and security, human rights and economic development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. It is necessary to have an integrated approach to lay the essential institutional foundations for prevention and reduction of the armed violence and pave the way for achieving sustainable peace and development and improving social inclusion, employment and education, good governance, human rights and the rule

of law. Nurturing of indigenous initiatives of conflict resolution, respect and recognition for localized solution of causes of armed violence helps create sustained base for conflict prevention. It is pertinent to recall the Istanbul Programme of Action's call for 'context specific approaches' to address poverty, security and governance in an integrated manner in conflict-affected least developed countries (LDCs) and also the call on development partners to strengthen support for them in rebuilding national institutions and capacity, rebuilding critical infrastructure and generating productive employment and decent work for all.

As a country having emerged after over a decade long armed conflict and engaged in institutionalizing peace, security, respect for human rights and socio-economic transformation within the overall framework of democratic polity, Nepal appreciates the draft declaration's emphasis on shared efforts to reduce armed violence and increased international cooperation. While translating the message of the declaration into concrete actions, we need to give more focus on building state capacity both in terms of resources and institutions. A capable and effective state has no substitute in reducing armed violence and mitigating its multitudinous repercussions. Nepal emphasizes on the channeling of the international support through appropriate state mechanisms, and endorses the draft declaration for its full, effective and timely implementation.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.