



Excellencies, honourable ministers, ladies and gentlemen:

Nonviolent Peaceforce extends greetings to delegates of the Geneva Declaration 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Review on Armed Violence and Development.

Well-trained, unarmed civilians can play an effective role in protecting civilians and in creating space for local violence reduction initiatives to take root and flourish. Local civil society and local duty-bearers cannot be expected to alone effectively address the phenomena and causes of armed violence when they themselves are under direct threat, or when their communities are disrupted by insecurity. Nonviolent Peaceforce presents one evidence-based model for providing direct protection to the most vulnerable populations in situations of acute violence, fostering an environment in which longer-term solutions can be developed. This model is not only a potential complement to proven AVR interventions featured at the Review Conference.

Nonviolent Peaceforce goes on invitation of groups deeply rooted in communities where there is violent conflict. NP peace protectors live in the villages, and work to implement early warning and early response protocols to protect civilians as they work to build sustainable peace for their communities.

In Sri Lanka, we provided protection for mothers when they sought the return of their children who had been kidnapped to become child soldiers; and protected child soldiers escaping from armed parties so that they could be safe from harm and find opportunities for reengaging in their communities. In Guatemala, we protected vulnerable women human rights defenders who were investigating cases of abductions, murders and injuries to other human rights defenders. In Mindanao Philippines we work closely with human rights defenders who report on the peace process to the International Monitoring Team. NP was invited by both armed parties to be a member of the civilian component of that team. In South Sudan, we are working with UNICEF to protect vulnerable women and children in Western Equatoria. In Unity State, in partnership with UNHCR, we are protecting refugees who are crossing the border to safety in South Sudan. In October 2011, NP officially launched a new programme in the South Caucasus, focused on tackling challenges to

human security faced by communities affected by the disputed borders of Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The programme will also support threatened human rights defenders. Field teams will be based in Gali (Abkhazia) and Gori (Tbilisi-administered Georgia), with an administration office in Tbilisi.

In keeping with its commitment to affirm the principles of UNSCR 1325, 40% of our civilian protection personnel are women. We work to protect women and children from sexual assault and to empower them to provide protection while they are peace-building in their communities.

NP continues to profile unarmed civilian protection as a legitimate and credible alternative to armed intervention, and seeks to persuade policymakers to adopt and mainstream our methodology. Toward that end, over the past 18 months NP delivered briefings to senior UN peacekeeping and UN humanitarian agency staff; to representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and at the Caux Forum for Human Security.

The delegation from Nonviolent Peaceforce welcomes the opportunity to discuss the practice of unarmed civilian protection with you and to consider how it helps to reduce armed violence by protecting civilians working for sustainable peace.

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