

Remarks from Mr. Shankar Prasad Koirala, Joint Secretary MoHA
Experts Meeting on
“Violence Reduction and Peace Building:
How Crime and Violence Observatories can Work.”
Geneva, 27th June 2013

Respected dignitaries, Government representatives and expert participants from different countries, please accept our greetings from Nepal.

We are pleased to be sharing the Nepal perspective during this experts meeting on **“Violence Reduction and Peace Building: How Crime and Violence Observatories can Work.”** We expect to hear of promising practices and challenges for different kinds of observatories, as we venture into the creation of Nepal’s own National Center for Security Observation. Our aim is to provide an evidence base for programming to reduce armed violence, provide positive impetus to the policing work, prevent conflict and enhance security for sustainable peace in Nepal.

As all of us in the room may agree, armed violence is a global problem. It destroys lives and livelihoods; breeds insecurity, fear and terror; and has a profound negative impact on human development at all levels (national, regional and individual). The statistics shows that more than 500,000 people die as a result of violence of various types every year and most of them are in the developing world.

Nepal also faces the problem of armed violence, primarily in the Southern Terai belt and rapidly growing urban areas. It poses a threat to the peace, security and development gains of Nepal.

Ensuring security in the country is the key mandate of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Ministry is aware of the immediate need to address the gradual proliferation of small arms, light weapons and organized crime in certain regions of the country.

The Government has brought forward various laws, plans and policies to address the issue. In this context, the Arms and Ammunitions Act, 1963 is the main legal instrument which authorizes the government to control all kinds of small arms and light weapons. The Act forbids import or export, possession, storing, manufacturing or improvising and sale or purchase of all kinds of arms and ammunitions without license. In addition, Organized Crime Control Ordinance, 2013,

Amendment of Anti Money Laundering 2013, Special Security Plan 2009, Small Arms Control Policy 2009, Management of Seized Arms and Ammunition Policy 2013 are other legal and policy instruments.

The Special Security Plan 2009, was implemented in 26 districts of the Terai and the Eastern Hills along with the Kathmandu valley and has six major goals including: a) tackling organized crime; b) eradicating highway blockade; c) dealing with cases of impunity; d) ensure public services delivery; e) restrict forced closure of public offices and educational institutions and f) increase participation in security management.

Likewise, the Small Arms Control Policy 2009 is more focused on seizing all kinds of illicit small arms and light weapons, control crimes and provide security to the local people. Recently the efforts in this direction have been reinvigorated and only in the last three months period, 5898 different types of weapons are handed over by the public to the security agencies.

The Government of Nepal is totally committed to its signatory status under the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Currently, the Ministry of Home Affairs and United Nations Development Programme have worked together extensively around the development of a new project on 'Armed Violence Reduction and Community Security' (AVRSCS). This project is under final review before a formal launch.

Improving Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting of Crime and Violence Data constitutes a foundation stone for the Armed Violence Reduction and Strengthening Community Security (AVRSCS) project jointly developed by Nepal's Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and UNDP in Nepal over the last one and a half years.

The AVRSCS project has five pillars :

1. Enhance capacities to monitor and analyze the incidence and distribution of armed violence to inform strategy development and planning;
2. Strengthen the capacities of the MoHA, NP, APF and NID to effectively control small arms and enhance community security;
3. Strengthen capacities for government-led coordination on armed violence reduction;

4. Support armed violence reduction initiatives in priority districts/localities and build confidence of citizens in State institutions; and
5. Increase public awareness and education on armed violence reduction.

The first pillar of the project prioritizes data monitoring, analysis and reporting for the creation of a strong evidence base that informs police tactic and strategy in efforts to strengthen security in regions identified as vulnerable to such violence.

A workshop in early May 2013, participated by different officials from the Government of Nepal including representatives from all police bodies and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), produced a strategy for the **National Center for Security Observation in Nepal**. We expect to start the physical setting up of the Observatory with support from UNDP in Nepal, by next month.

Preceding the workshop, a senior delegation from the Government of Nepal visited the Crime and Violence Observatory in Honduras and brought back the lessons applicable to the Nepal scenario. The strength of the Honduras observatory was its independence, the multidimensional expertise involved and their work with ‘youth at risk.’

I would also highlight that Honduras Observatory had a lot of interesting aspects, but the delegation felt, that there was an apparent absence of clear lines of communication between the observatory and the police. No matter how robust the collected data, in the absence of the collaboration with the security bodies, its effective utilization shall remain questionable.

The security bodies of the Government are responsible for preventing crime and violence, and therefore the Nepal strategy for its observation system puts government leadership at the centre for the collection, analysis and management of such data. The expectation is to be able to translate the data into police action plans immediately.

Such a strategy will lay the foundation for a robust crime and violence surveillance system, owned and led by the Government and informing government security and development action plans. The analysis from such system could facilitate preemptive activities in the day to day work of the security bodies to prevent violence escalation and act as some sort of early warning measure. It would also strengthen understanding of crime and violence, building on authentic

and accurate data and analysis and prevent misconstrued information. The police undoubtedly would be the major source of authentic primary data on the issue as they have the broadest outreach and access even to the most remote parts of the country.

That is the reason why we expect the National Security Observation System in Nepal to be located at the Crime Investigation Department in the Nepal Police under the overall leadership of MoHA, so that the data that gets collected and analyzed can immediately translate into police action plans but also inform local development priorities.

The best AVR practices exhibit multi sectoral approach with targeted efforts designed to address the root causes of violence alongside efforts to build stronger relations between the security providers and communities but also to address the disenfranchisement and grievances. Such efforts have the potential to prevent and reduce armed violence. Hence we recognize the importance of scientific analysis of the collected data to inform multidimensional programming responses. Hence the observation system shall include a scientific team who can access the desensitized crime and violence data to analyze it in its different aspects and derive analytical reports, that can contribute to not only better security planning and responses but also development responses.

Effective programs strengthen what exists by incorporating new dimensions suited to the particular context. The Nepal police have an extensive system of data collection and monitoring. However, there is a clear need for strengthening the analysis of such data, incorporating different expert perspectives so as to inform NP's strategic orientation and create at the tactical level - operational tools for the prevention and fight against crime. Analysis is conducted by the Nepal police but more on a needs basis at specific locations rather than on a more systematic and institutionalized basis. There is a clear need for the institutionalization of such analytical practices, regular victimization surveys and reporting on the emergent trends. We expect the proposed center for security observation to fill in this gap.

In the Nepalese scenario with a rather politicized civil society and academia, strengthening government systems can provide an avenue to enhance the effectiveness of our work in relation to security. It will also facilitate an in depth understanding of the nature of the problem for development interventions. A palatable middle course could be the building of the Government

capacity to collect, monitor and analyse the data but including the civil society and the academia to provide secondary data to the GoN and also to analyze the existing data and make specific recommendations on how it could inform security and development programming.

Hence, building on the credibility of the Nepal police as the organization that has access to maximum information on the crime and violence cases occurring in all the parts of the country, cashing on the civil society and academia's expert analysis on the multiple dimensions of the crime and violence data, the National Center for Security Observation in Nepal shall provide a strong evidence base for security and development programming in Nepal, crucial for Nepal's long term peace and protection of development gains.