

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

Armed violence destroys lives and livelihoods, breeds insecurity, fear and terror, and has a profoundly negative impact on human development. Whether in situations of conflict or crime, it imposes enormous costs on states, communities and individuals.

Armed violence closes schools, empties markets, burdens health services, destroys families, weakens the rule of law, and prevents humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need.

Armed violence kills -- directly and indirectly -- hundreds of thousands of people each year and injures countless more, often with lifelong consequences. It threatens permanently the respect of human rights. Living free from the threat of armed violence is a basic human need. It is a precondition for human development, dignity and well-being. Providing for the human security of their citizens is a core responsibility of governments.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, global leaders recognized the strong linkage and mutual reinforcement between development, peace, security and human rights. They stressed the right of people to live in dignity, free from fear and from want. The international community has acknowledged that armed violence and conflict impede realization of the Millennium Development Goals, and that conflict prevention and resolution, violence reduction, human rights, good governance and peace-building are key steps towards reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and improving people's lives.

The Peacebuilding Commission, by establishing an institutional link between security and development, will also promote an integrated approach to post-conflict peace building and play a central role in addressing the problem of armed violence.

Recognizing these realities, we, Ministers and representatives from 42 countries, representing all the world's regions, have gathered in Geneva and have resolved to promote sustainable security and a culture of peace by taking action to reduce armed violence and its negative impact on socio-economic and human development.

We will strengthen our efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional and multilateral development frameworks, institutions and strategies, as well as into humanitarian assistance, emergency, and crisis management initiatives.

We will work individually and together, at national, regional and multilateral levels, on practical measures that:

- promote conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation, and support postconflict peace-building and reconstruction;
- stem the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and lead to effective weapons reduction, post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and small arms control, including control of arms transfers and of illicit brokering;
- uphold full respect for human rights, promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts based on justice and the rule of law, and address a climate of impunity;
- foster effective and accountable public security institutions;

- promote a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues, recognizing the different situations, needs and resources of men and women, boys and girls, as reflected in the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1612;
- ensure that armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives target specific risk factors and groups, and are linked to programmes providing non-violent alternative livelihoods for individuals and communities.

We will take further action to deal effectively both with the supply of, and the demand for, small arms and light weapons. This includes implementing fully existing instruments, in particular the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and promoting the development of further international instruments, including legally binding ones.

We commit to enhancing the financial, technical and human resources devoted to addressing armed violence issues in a cooperative, comprehensive and coordinated manner, including working *inter alia* to advance this issue within the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other relevant organizations.

We will support initiatives to measure the human, social and economic costs of armed violence, to assess risks and vulnerabilities, to evaluate the effectiveness of armed violence reduction programmes, and to disseminate knowledge of best practices.

We will work with affected states and communities, and with the donor community, to promote solutions at the local, national, regional and global level.

We will strive to achieve, by 2015, measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security worldwide.

We will work in partnership with the development, peace and security-building, public health, humanitarian, human rights and criminal justice communities, and, recognizing the important role civil society has to play in reducing armed violence, promote active partnerships between governments, international organizations and civil society.

We will present this declaration to the upcoming UN conference to review the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We commit ourselves to pursuing this initiative in all appropriate fora and to meeting again no later than 2008 to assess our progress in achieving these goals.

Geneva, 7 June 2006

Afghanistan
Australia
Austria
Bulgaria
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Costa Rica
El Salvador
Finland
France
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Honduras
Indonesia
Ireland
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Korea, Republic of
Lebanon
Liberia
Mali
Mexico
Morocco
Mozambique
The Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Papua New Guinea
Senegal
Slovenia
South Africa
Sweden
Switzerland
Thailand
Timor-Leste
United Kingdom

Geneva, 7 June 2006

Background note on the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development of 7 June 2006 and its follow-up activities (March 2007)

On 7 June 2006, 42 states and 17 international organizations and non-governmental organizations gathered in Geneva, Switzerland for a Ministerial Summit on Armed Violence and Development, which was hosted by Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The objectives of the summit were:

- to raise global awareness of the negative impact of armed violence on sustainable development;
- to further support the work of governments, international organizations and civil society organizations that are committed to reducing armed violence within a development perspective; and
- to strengthen efforts to achieve a measurable reduction in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security by 2015.

At the conclusion of the summit, the 42 participating states adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Recognizing that the fight against the global scourge of armed violence and the prospects for sustainable development are closely linked, the participants agreed in particular to strengthen their efforts to integrate armed violence reduction and conflict prevention programmes into national, regional and multilateral development frameworks and strategies, as well as into humanitarian assistance, emergency and crisis management initiatives.

The participants also agreed to work together on practical measures that:

- promote conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation, as well as support post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction,
- stem the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and lead to effective weapons reduction, post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and small arms control, including control of arms transfers and of illicit brokering;
- uphold full respect of human rights, promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts based on justice and the rule of law, and address a climate of impunity;
- foster effective and accountable public security institutions;
- promote a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues, recognizing the different situations, needs and resources of men and women, boys and girls, as reflected in the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1612;
- ensure that armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives target specific risk factors and groups, and are linked to programmes providing non-violent alternative livelihoods for individuals and communities.

Since 7 June 2006 seven further States have formally endorsed the Geneva Declaration. These States are: Peru, Hungary, Sierra Leone, Qatar, Holy See, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy.

Participants to the summit emphasized that the principles and goals of the Geneva Declaration should not remain empty words but be followed by concrete measures. Switzerland proposed to work with a group of interested states, in order to develop the commitments contained in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development as well as to increase the support for the Declaration and its follow-up activities.

A core group of ten states as the political and diplomatic driving force responsible for advancing the goals of the Geneva Declaration was constituted on 14 November 2006, when it met for its first meeting in Geneva. Members of the core group are Canada, Guatemala, Finland, Kenya,

Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom. The group is coordinated by Switzerland. The immediate objective of the core group is to develop an Action Plan that will be submitted to the States who have endorsed the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development for approval by June 2007. The second core group meeting took place in Geneva on 20 February 2007. The meeting focused on the design of the Action Plan, in particular on its three clusters of “Advocacy, Dissemination and Coordination”, “Measurability and Research” and Programming”.

A first regional meeting on “Armed Violence and Development” for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will take place in Guatemala on 23 and 24 April 2007. Further regional meetings for the countries of Africa and Asia respectively will be held in the second half of 2007 and 2008.