

Briefing Paper

Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva

Progress on Armed Violence and Development: Towards the UN Secretary General's Report

The concept of 'Armed Violence and Development' (AVD), on which QUNO has been working for around 18 months, brings together a concern with the developmental costs of armed violence, and a recognition that strong, equitable and transformative socio-economic development can help to redress the underlying causes of violence. This simple but powerful concept is embodied politically in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (GD), initially produced in 2006, and now signed by over 100 states from all regions of the world.

The GD commits governments to work towards a holistic approach to AVD along three tracks: advocacy, measurability and programming. The initial stage of the advocacy part of this agenda has involved a series of international conferences and bilateral diplomacy, and has resulted a rapid expansion in the number of signatories. The more general goal, however, is to put AVD firmly on the international agenda, both with a view to its incorporation into current programming and policy, and in the longer term to its inclusion in whatever follows the Millennium Development Goals after 2015. This advocacy work thus supports the programming and measurability aspects, by creating a conducive international environment and norms.

To this end, the Swiss government, in cooperation with other states, sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution (63/23) in November 2008 entitled 'Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence'. This resolution, adopted by consensus, "*stresses the need for a coherent and integrated approach to the prevention of armed violence, with a view to achieving sustainable peace and development*". More practically, it requests that the Secretary General produce a report on the issue for the next session of General Assembly, which will begin in Autumn 2009.

Secretary General's reports are important mechanisms for raising awareness around an issue, creating legitimacy within the international system, and creating space for the articulation of a clear policy agenda. They are based on the views of member states of the UN, which are gathered through specific submissions. The UN secretariat sent out the request for submissions, called a *note verbale*, for this report in February, and the Swiss government in cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has recently carried out briefings for states explaining how to go about making a submission, and giving guidance on what to include. The deadline for submissions is 31st May.

This report is a key opportunity to get AVD issues more prominently onto the international agenda, but to do this, there needs to be a good number of thorough submissions made by a range of states. As the report must reflect the views of states, for any point to be included in the final version it must be in at least one (and preferably many) state submissions. Civil society nevertheless has an important role in working with states to ensure that the key points are made.

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Key Messages for the Secretary General's Report

There are a number of key points that the final report should be able to make, and thus that need to be included in state submissions.

Firstly, state submissions need to be explicit that there are **clear linkages between armed violence and development**. If states can support this with particular evidence from their experience, the report will be a stronger document.

Secondly, the negative impact of armed violence on development prospects means that **armed violence prevention and reduction should be integrated with development planning**, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which are macro-scale plans drawn up by governments in cooperation with civil society and donors. However, this should not be a condition imposed by the donor community.

Thirdly, a strong Secretary General's report would include the following practical elements. Ideally, therefore, state submissions should not only emphasize these points, but also give examples of concrete actions taken by states in each area:

National programming is the essential core of achieving measurable reductions in armed violence. Ideally, states could suggest that AVD be integrated into national development strategies, such as PRSPs.

Rigorous measurement of armed violence as it impacts the state, its linkages with development, and the effectiveness of AVD programming. Without this, it is impossible to know what works, and to make coherent strategic choices. Ideally, states could include a recommendation that data be collected by each state, consolidated and made publicly available.

Many existing treaties and international agreements, if properly implemented, would contribute to promote development and armed violence reduction. These range from weapons limitation agreements like the Oslo Convention on cluster munitions through to rights based approaches, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

International cooperation and assistance is vital to successful AVD work, with responsibilities for both donor and recipient states. Recipient states should include explicit programming on armed violence prevention within PRSPs and other development frameworks, whilst donor states must include funding for armed violence reduction and prevention within their development budgets. Integrating armed violence into development assistance will help to improve aid effectiveness.

Action Points

For States

The action needed is clear: produce a strong submission for the Secretary General's report on AVD, and submit it by the deadline on **May 31st 2009**.

For Civil Society

The best way to ensure a strong Secretary General's report is to work with your governments to ensure that they make a strong submission. You could:

Contact the relevant officials, likely to be in the development agency or related ministry. Ensure that they are aware of the report, explain the importance of sending your country's views to the UN Secretary General and if necessary provide a copy of the *note verbale* (available at www.iansa.org/campaigns_events/UNSGconsultations_armed_violence.htm).

Maintain regular contact to ensure that the submission is completed. Governments have many reports and submissions to make, and will need to keep to a tight schedule to complete this on by the May 31st deadline.

If you are able to, work with government representatives on the actual drafting of the submission. The International Action Network on Small Arms has produced a draft submission, covering the points discussed above (available from QUNO or from IANSA).

Ensure that the submission is sent in by the deadline. It must be sent by the Foreign Ministry to the country's Mission in New York, who must then send it to the UN secretariat.

If you would like support or assistance in any of these actions, do not hesitate to contact Adam Drury at QUNO on quno1@quno.ch.