

# Geneva Reporter

*Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva*

## The Future of Armed Violence and Development

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, agreed in 2006, stands at something of a crossroads as we enter 2009. November saw the penultimate event in its series of high-level regional meetings, with 24 states, 16

regional and international organizations and 12 NGOs from Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus gathering in Sarajevo for a two-day conference. As at previous regional conferences, the principal objectives were to raise

awareness of the Geneva Declaration and for new states to officially endorse the Declaration itself. Both objectives were successfully achieved, with a large majority of the

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## Universal Periodic Review

One of the innovations of the UN Human Rights Council is that each member state of the UN is to have its human rights record reviewed during a period of four years. The review is based on three documents: a report prepared by the State under review, a compilation of UN information (for example, from human rights Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council), and a summary of information from 'other stakeholders' (non-governmental organisations, national human rights institutions and regional human rights bodies). The review is conducted in a working group of the whole Human Rights Council, during which other government representatives pose questions and make recommendations following an introductory statement from the State under review. This State may choose to respond to the questions in batches, or to wait until all those who wish to speak have done so. In addition to oral questions, States can submit written questions in advance,

to which the State under review may respond explicitly, either in their opening statement or following the opening statement. At the end of the three-hour review session, a summary report is prepared, containing the Recommendations made (identified with the name of the State or States making them), and the State under review's response to the Recommendations – acceptance, rejection, consideration or will respond before the report is adopted in a later Plenary session of the Human Rights Council.

In December, the third such Working Group session took place, with 16 diverse States being reviewed. Clearly the process is beginning to 'bed down'. In the early stages, no-one knew what to expect, and the States raising the questions and making recommendations were on as much of a learning curve as the States being reviewed. Now, the pattern is more settled and it is interesting and encouraging to see more States from

all regions asking questions and making recommendations, and with a more consistent emphasis on human rights issues and less politicking.

For QUNO, of particular interest is that the issue of children of prisoners was raised with a number of the States under review – in the form of written questions in advance as well as of questions in the working group itself. This led five States to provide some information about their practices, in particular in relation to babies and young children accompanying their mother into prison, and recommendations about giving priority to non-custodial measures and taking the best interests of the child into account in detaining or sentencing were also made.

In addition, questions and recommendations about conscientious objection to military service were made to Colombia, Israel, Serbia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



## The Future of Armed Violence and Development (continued)

regional states present signing up to the Geneva Declaration, as well as a regionally tailored Sarajevo Declaration.

What these regional conferences have achieved falls mostly under the ‘advocacy’ aspect of the Geneva Declaration’s threefold agenda of ‘advocacy’, ‘measurability’ and ‘programming’. This first objective has been pursued rather successfully over the last two years, with 105 states now having signed the Declaration and its regional versions. What has been achieved is a broad consensus that the linkages between armed violence and development are significant, and require attention and

action. This is most clearly expressed in the Resolution on Armed Violence and Development recently adopted by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/63/23). The resolution was adopted without a vote, a clear and significant sign of international consensus around this issue, despite certain states’ reluctance to actually *sign* the Declaration.

Advocacy and coalition building, however, can only be the first phase of the Geneva Declaration’s existence – if the fine words of the text are to mean anything, the next phase must look much more concretely at programming on the

ground. This is where the UNGA resolution is important. In addition to commending the Geneva Declaration, the resolution asks the UN Secretary General to produce a report on “the interrelation between armed violence and development”. This report, then, will need to explore what it means to put these concepts into practice, and how these ideas can make a real difference where it matters – on the ground. The Declaration calls for ‘measurable reductions in the burden of armed violence by 2015’, and the next phase of work, including the report, must begin to ensure that this becomes a reality.

## Fisheries Subsidies Negotiations at the WTO

The WTO negotiations include an important area, the so-called Rules, which include Anti-dumping, and more broadly Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM). The Doha Declaration contains a specific reference to the necessity to have clear rules on Fisheries subsidies (FS). Actually, the Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) are the most active developing countries in these negotiations, because of the importance of fisheries exports to their economies.

In 2001, during the Ministerial meeting held in Doha, WTO Members (in paragraph 28 of their Declaration) agreed “to negotiations aimed at clarifying and improving disciplines under the Agreements on Implementation of Article VI of the GATT 1994 and on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, while preserving the basic concepts, principles and effectiveness of these Agreements and their instruments and objectives, and taking into account the needs of developing and least-developed participants...In the context of these negotiations, participants shall also aim to clarify and improve WTO disciplines on fisheries subsidies, taking

*into account the importance of this sector to developing countries”.*

Members also noted that FS have close links with environmental issues. Thus, the paragraph 31 of the Ministerial Declaration, related to trade and environment, states that “...*fisheries subsidies form part of the negotiations provided for in paragraph 28*”. Because the Committee on Trade and Environment has the power only to make recommendations, the current negotiations on fisheries subsidies are taking place in the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules.

WTO members took different approaches: a ‘no need’ approach, defended mainly by Japan and South Korea; a ‘traffic light’ approach categorising subsidy sensitivity (red, amber or green boxes), supported mainly by the EU; and a ‘special and differential treatment’ approach, supported by developing countries and mainly the SVEs (Access fees and development assistance, fiscal incentives, and a special treatment for artisanal fisheries).

In 2007, the chair of the Working Group on Rules circulated a text on

FS (Annex VIII), inserted in the Agreement on SCM. The text is a mixture of the ‘Traffic lights’ and the ‘Special and differential treatment’ approaches.

Because of the focus of WTO Members on key issues, namely Agriculture and Market Access for Industrial products (NAMA), progress on rules has been very slow. In 2008, the Chair of the Working Group also reiterated the fact that WTO Members “*are faced with fundamental challenges, including how we can develop rules that are effective in disciplining subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and over-fishing, while formulating special and differential treatment that addresses the very real concerns of developing Members with respect to development priorities, poverty reduction, and livelihood and food security concerns, including for millions of small fishers*”.

Finally, the consultations among the main players, requested by the Chair, will probably allow negotiations to move forward and to set effective provisions on FS at the multilateral level, including special rules for developing countries.



## Arms Control and the Art of Putting People First

The causes of disarmament and human security received a major boost in 2008 from the new Convention on Cluster Munitions. The true tests remain—ratification by 30 countries to enable its entry into force, moving beyond the 95 current signatories, and implementation of the Convention’s provisions by states parties. But there is no doubt that a significant milestone has been reached in the international community’s ability to focus on a problem of important humanitarian concern and then design and agree a solution.

In the international diplomacy of arms control and disarmament, these moments come rarely. When they do, understanding the enabling circumstances and factors is vital, both for a full picture of the achievement, and for lessons which might be used in other weapons-related concerns. In this spirit, in November 2008 a symposium entitled “Learn, Adapt, Succeed: Potential lessons from the Ottawa and Oslo processes for other disarmament and arms control challenges” examined processes that achieved the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Conventions respectively. Key governmental and non-governmental actors spent two days reflecting critically on lessons learned and elements which might be adapted for multilateral action in other areas of disarmament and arms control. This article draws on the symposium’s summary report ( see [www.geneva-forum.org](http://www.geneva-forum.org)).

When the Mine Ban Convention was achieved, skeptics said it was a “one-off”, that the circumstances were too specific to be repeated. Nevertheless, much attention has since been given to the processes which achieved that convention and which have seen it successfully implemented. This experience has

seeped into the thinking and action of diplomats and practitioners alike. And, despite the skeptics, a new Convention on Cluster Munitions has been agreed, demonstrating once again what can be achieved when the humanitarian dimension is placed at the centre of the debate.

Participants in the seminar identified a number of key elements characterizing the Ottawa and Oslo processes, and important in their success. In both, supporters focused on the effects of weapons on civilians during and after armed conflict and on the human cost of the weapons’ past and future use. A strong, direct link was thus established between the weapons and their human impact. In both processes, proponents based their campaigns on practical field knowledge and rigorous data collection. Both campaigns succeeded in shifting the burden of proof to the weapon user, requiring a convincing case for its acceptability in humanitarian terms, regardless of their purported military advantage. Characterizing both processes were the important working partnerships developed between civil society organizations, governments and intergovernmental organizations. Civil society also played a crucial role in framing the issues as humanitarian problems, helping set the international agenda, sustaining the process by educating state representatives, the media and the public about the problem, and maintaining pressure on governments to participate. Both processes gained legitimacy because they drew on actors from all regions of the world. The sense of urgency to do something and the establishment of clear objectives were also keys to success.

These “lessons” are important in thinking about what makes

successful multilateral action. The Ottawa and Oslo processes have already inspired other initiatives, such as efforts to regulate the conventional arms trade, reduce the global burden of armed violence and challenge the use of explosive violence in populated areas. However, several things make the transferability of the Ottawa and Oslo experiences difficult. For example, the misuse of small arms and light weapons can have horrendous humanitarian impacts, but the “solution” to diminishing this impact does not lie in banning them, as they can be seen to have legitimate uses. Instead, better regulation of their availability and tackling the factors underlying their potential misuse are key. Yes, there are important “lessons” from the Ottawa and Oslo experiences, but care must be taken in seeking to apply them to other contexts.

One of the most important outcomes of this symposium, bringing together as it did actors from a range of weapons related campaigns and processes, was the discussion which took place following a presentation on “The Global Burden of Armed Violence” report by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development secretariat (available at [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org)). Emerging from this thinking was an early vision of an “armed violence prevention and reduction” framework under which different weapons processes could be placed, thus encouraging the development of a common vocabulary for action and offering the prospects for partnerships across such processes to be built and synergies realized. The central organizing principle of this emergent thinking is, of course, one of the key lessons from the Ottawa experience a decade ago—putting people first.



## Caroline Dommen Joins QUNO Staff Team

The Quaker United Nations Office is pleased to announce the appointment of **Caroline Dommen** as Representative for QUNO's Global Economic Issues programme. Caroline brings long experience in both international trade and development policy and environmental policy to this position. She comes to QUNO from the NGO 3D → Trade - Human Rights - Equitable Economy, where she was founder and director. Caroline holds a Masters Degree in Law and Development from London

University, and is also a member of several professional bodies including the International Advisory Network of the [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#), the IUCN-World Conservation Union Commission on Environmental Law, and the Sustainable Development Committee of the International Law Association. Not only will Caroline be joining a Programme which has a strong record of achievement in the trade and development area but she will also be tasked with developing and shaping that programme in line

with the changing global economic and environmental circumstances. She will begin her work at QUNO in mid-February. We look forward to welcoming Caroline to QUNO and working with her.

Caroline will be taking up the post vacated in November 2007 by Martin Watson. **Nava Doré** has ably and efficiently filled this position on an interim basis since then. QUNO wishes to thank her for her many contributions to QUNO during this period.

## Staff News

**David Atwood** travelled to India in November for the Friends World Committee for Consultation Asia-West Pacific Section Biennial, which was held

in Bhopal. Whilst in India, he also spoke at the Control Arms Foundation of India in New Delhi.

**Adam Drury** and QUNO

consultant **David Jackman** attended the Geneva Declaration regional meeting of states from Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, in Sarajevo.

### LEARN ABOUT THE UN AT THE UN

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Information and application packs now available on [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org), and at [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk)

Application deadline - 17th March 2009

### PROGRAMME ASSISTANT POSITIONS

QUNO Geneva will soon be advertising for two Programme Assistants for 2009-2010. The announcement and information will be available at [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org)

## Recent Publications

- **International Standards on Conscientious Objection to Military Service**, by Rachel Brett. Available in English, French and Spanish. Available at [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org)
- **The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development: An International Newsletter on Integrating Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction into Development Strategies**. Issues 3 and 4, October and December 2008. Available in English and French. Available at [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org)
- **Good Practices Magazine: Inspiring Actions, Merging Agendas: From Armed Violence to Development** (produced jointly by Viva Rio, Comunidad Segura and QUNO), Year 1. Number 2, November 2008. Available at [www.genevadeclaration.org](http://www.genevadeclaration.org)

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