

Forum on Security and Development

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Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I participate in this very distinguished panel with great pleasure and much anticipation. I thank you for this invitation extending the area of United Nations-World Bank cooperation from the development to the disarmament arena as well.
2. The traditional role of DDA has been to facilitate mutually acceptable agreements on achieving international security at the lowest level of armaments. As the designated focal point to coordinate all actions on small arms within the United Nations system, DDA is recently assuming a larger role in both defining the new global security agenda and in implementing decisions to forestall and meet emerging threats to security. The role is performed through undertaking expert studies at the request of the General Assembly, giving specialised briefings to the Security Council, providing advice to the Secretary General and executing projects designed to meet specific requests for assistance by member-states confronting problems of practical disarmament such as demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and dewatering of civil societies.
3. As of now, it is our understanding that unregulated weapons in the hands of civil society may also constitute a threat to national and citizen security in addition to the incomplete retrieval of weapons from former combatants. In several post conflict situations, the number of weapons in civilians possession, often outside the reach of state control, could be hundred times more than those possessed or surrendered by former combatants. These weapons are, in many cases, acquired first for self protection by civilians living in remote areas where state authority ceases to exist a few miles out of the capital cities. During the outbreak of armed internal conflicts, the civilians tend to acquire more weapons to guard themselves against both the warring factions. After the cessation of armed conflicts, weapons left behind by the parties to peace accords find their way into civil society which becomes vulnerable to recurring violence and increased

criminality. While the ratio of persons actually using weapons for acts of violence and criminality is very low as compared to those who simply possess them, the impact of recurring violence and criminality is a double disaster. It negates decades of developmental gains in some of the poorest regions of the world. It is a major disincentive against private sector investment in some of the sub-regions most likely to offer quick returns to investors.

4. While small arms constitute the focus of our attention as the primary or sole tools of violence in most of the conflicts currently dealt with by the United Nations, we also receive growing requests for assistance from countries engaged in post conflict peace building. In responding to those requests, we are faced with a repeated realisation. Stable peace rests as much on sustainable disarmament as on sustainable development. The Belgian Call for Action is a very timely initiative to translate a political commitment into concrete activities. I wish to once again pay my tribute to Mr. Moreels who is the driving force behind this initiative and whose presence here today is yet another demonstration of his visionary zeal.
5. It may sound like an over-simplification. And yet , it could bear being stated again. A less armed and more developed world will be a more secure world for every one. To work towards the establishment of such a world, we are expected to devote greater political energies and material resources to those subregions where a combination of excessive weaponisation and underdevelopment constitute a serious threat to national and human security. It is doubtlessly a non military threat but a devastating one nevertheless considering that there are at least twenty to thirty locations around the world where the threat is real. Although I have not had the chance to check it for complete accuracy, I suspect that the list replicates many locations where the Bank is already engaged in, or could be called upon to, assume greater responsibility for post-conflict peace building.
6. In consultation with the countries affected by the twin threats of excessive weaponization and underdevelopment, my Department has been developing projects where community based development activities are offered as non-cash incentives for voluntary weapons surrender. The underlying approach is to raise societal stakes in uninterrupted peace by providing it with more to lose in the event of recurring violence or armed conflict. We know too well of conflict breeding vested interests who have much to gain from their prolongation. We need to create vested interests in peace. A program of weapons in exchange for development is now being implemented in Albania. Bolivia and Niger are among others who have formally requested assistance on similar lines. I assume that many more are awaiting the outcome of our pilot project in Albania which was put on hold due to the situation in Kosovo but has resumed.
7. I firmly believe that greater investment in income-generating and employment creating community based development activities would reduce the incidence of recurring violence in many places. My Department has followed with keen interest the evolution of a more active role by the Bank in areas where the United Nations has been engaged as an integral part of its responsibilities for conflict-prevention, conflict-management and post conflict peace-building. I believe that it is in our mutual interest to share our experiences and, where possible, dovetail our activities. I would particularly welcome the prospect of field cooperation between the Bank and DDA in implementing weapons for development approach. The Conventional Arms Branch of my Department has been in continuing contact with the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit of the Bank and we look forward to PCRUs debut appearance in the next meeting of CASA -

Coordinating Action on Small Arms - which is the mechanism established by the Secretary-General to coordinate the humanitarian, security, and developmental aspects of the big challenge currently posed by the excessive proliferation and accumulation of small arms.

Thank you all.