

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

This conference is opening against a historical backdrop of human tragedy -- a tragedy for the people of Cambodia, but also a global tragedy, involving the deaths of millions of civilians in armed conflicts. Yet it is not tears and bloodshed -- but hope and determination -- that bring us here today.

We understand that tragedy and despair are not the only legacies of the twentieth century. The world has also witnessed the emergence of global institutions focused on human needs and backed by leaders throughout civil society. We have witnessed the gradual emergence of a global community of states, regional institutions, private groups, and individuals devoted to both arms control and development. Here today, representatives of this diverse community have gathered to address sensitive matters in a spirit of mutual respect -- this reflects our common conviction that the challenges we collectively face, must also be solved collectively.

I wish at the outset to salute the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace for their joint efforts in organizing this event, as well as the Commission of the European Union for backing this initiative. Such collaboration bodes well for future joint ventures between public and private sectors in tackling some of the most complex problems on the international security agenda.

The Challenges Ahead and Multilateral Responses

The challenges from the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons are clear -- these weapons are readily available, easily transportable, profitably traded, and brutally efficient in their deadly use. The UN Charter itself reserves the option of using armed force to enforce the peace and also treats self defence as an "inherent right" of states. While we in the UN call for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, the aim for conventional arms control is thus focused on reducing these weapons to the lowest levels consistent with domestic safety and international peace and security, on protecting civilians in armed conflicts, and on observing the humanitarian rules of war. The Charter's formula for advancing these interests consists of arms reductions, the promotion of the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the rule of law, and measures to address the roots of conflict found in chronic social and economic underdevelopment. The Charter describes the United Nations organization as "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations."

Disarmament and arms control measures offer useful tools in fulfilling many of the Charter's most solemn goals, particularly in development. Global institutions like the World Bank and the UN Development Programme are paying closer attention to the roots of conflict, the role of arms in perpetuating or aggravating such conflict, and the effects of prolonged armed conflicts on national economic development. The UN has for many years assessed the social and economic impacts of military expenditures. Examples include Secretary-General U Thant's 1970 report on the "Economic and Social Consequences of Disarmament" and the work at three Special Sessions of the General Assembly on disarmament. In 1987, the General Assembly convened an "International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development" that was attended by 150 countries.

With respect to small arms, the need for "concerted action" to address the problem of illicit trade in small arms was specifically highlighted in last year's Millennium Declaration. The UN is also making final preparations for the July 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In the Secretariat, we have an inter-departmental mechanism for "Coordinating Action on Small Arms" (CASA), which works to integrate and harmonize diverse activities within the UN system in this field. The Department of Disarmament Affairs has also been promoting the concept of "sustainable disarmament" -- an effort to expand the constituency of disarmament to include many segments of society that stand to benefit from reduced weapons stockpiles and arms expenditures. Because progress in arms control and disarmament has positive effects for development and other goals of the Charter, the Department is seeking to work with other UN offices to "mainstream disarmament" at the United Nations.

These efforts are reinforced by parallel initiatives underway at the regional level, specifically in West and South Africa, Latin America, and in the European Community. TDDAy's conference will help in improving prospects for cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. I have recently had the honour of attending regional meetings in Brazil and Mali that were convened to develop common regional approaches to the forthcoming UN conference on small arms. Uniting all these efforts is a shared appreciation of the close interdependence between development and arms reductions measures.

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Military Expenditure and Human Development Needs

The historian Paul Kennedy has documented meticulously the extent to which even the greatest of empires paid dearly for their excessive arms expenditures. And the impact of excessive arms budgets and stockpiles in poor countries is even more tragic; today, almost half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. Such arms, therefore, not only limit development options but also increase the risks and costs of violence, a dynamic that is worsened by the constant acquisition of additional arms.

The first half of the 1990s began with hopes for a post-Cold-War "peace dividend" and in fact there were some reductions in global military expenditures. These reductions no doubt contributed to global economic growth over the decade. Yet by 1997 military expenditures were rising once again, and now stand at around \$800 billion.

Many developing countries are also increasing their military expenditures, thus providing new markets for international arms sales. Global arms transfer agreements with developing nations increased from \$16.8 billion in 1998 to \$20.6 billion in 1999. The U.S. Congressional Research Service estimates that global arms deliveries from 1992 to 1999 totalled more than \$296 billion, nearly 70 percent of which went to developing countries. By comparison, some UN agencies have estimated that it would require an additional \$70 to \$80 billion per year to provide primary education, low-cost water, sanitation and public health facilities and reproductive health, family planning and clinical services to all those in need. Such a package of measures would go a long way toward cutting global poverty in half by 2015, a key goal of the Millennium Declaration.

Development assistance, however, remains inadequate to such tasks. According to the 1999 World Economic Survey by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, development assistance from the OECD countries constituted 0.22 per cent of their collective GNP in 1997, which is the lowest ratio since 1970. More worrying is the fact that overall official development assistance from OECD to the Least Developed Countries has fallen more sharply. External assistance is crucial to the success of peace-building efforts in post-conflict societies.

Defence Conversion

Another global challenge in the field of conventional arms concerns the conversion of military facilities to civilian purposes. Leaders worldwide are increasingly viewing this concept -- once dismissed as utopian -- as serving the public interest. Defence conversion satisfies the test of common sense. It involves the transformation of military structures and resources to peaceful uses -- this is accomplished through the downsizing of military forces, the reduction of military expenditures, the re-orientation of research and development, the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, and the destruction of surplus weapons.

The excessive accumulation and illicit trafficking in small arms has hindered each of these goals. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted in his Millenium Report to the United Nations General Assembly, "Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development." The failure to face up to these challenges only further discourages domestic and foreign investment, impedes development, and gives rise to new risks of violent conflict.

In certain circumstances, practical disarmament measures offer new hope in alleviating many of these problems -- particularly "weapons for development" projects aimed at the retrieval and collection of illegal weapons in exchange for community-based development incentives. Upon their request, the Department of Disarmament Affairs is helping States to address the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons -- particularly in the context of peace building activities.

Conclusion

Leadership in dealing with problems stemming from the proliferation of small arms in the Asia Pacific region must necessarily come from the region itself. It is vital for leaders in this region to view outside efforts to address this problem as fully consistent with national sovereignty -- and not motivated simply to achieve expedient foreign policy objectives having nothing to do with arms control or development. The legitimate goal of these efforts must be to complement and facilitate efforts within the region to address these problems. It is the interests of the people of the region that must remain the paramount concern, not the special interests, either foreign or domestic.

National leaders who are committed to peace and development require extensive help, both from their societies at large and from outside powers. The greater the recognition of the benefits of disarmament for development, the easier this task will be. For with this recognition we will truly find ourselves at the dawn of a new age -- an age when arms races are replaced with races to satisfy genuine human needs, and climates of fear and suspicion are dissipated by declining military expenditures and weapons stockpiles. The new age will be a time for both sustainable development and sustainable disarmament -- the one reinforcing the other.

The Asia Pacific region -- with its great population, its resources, its potentially bright future, and

its bitter experiences with arms races and wars -- is in a position today to demonstrate to the world what disarmament can do for peace and development. It is a noble cause indeed, one that has cultural roots in this region dating back thousands of years.

In his dissenting opinion to an Advisory Opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in 1996, Judge Weeramantry cited the ancient epic, the Ramayana, which is very much a part of the cultural heritage of Cambodia. "In the course this epic struggle," Judge Weeramantry reminds us,

a weapon of war became available to Rama's half-brother, Lakshmana, which could "destroy the entire race of the enemy, including those who could not bear arms." Rama advised Lakshmana that the weapon could not be used in the war "because such destruction en masse was forbidden by the ancient laws of war, even though Ravana was fighting an unjust war with an unrighteous objective."

I have every reason to hope that, with this great cultural tradition, a tradition indeed shared by all of humanity, we will one day find solutions to the problems of international peace and security that bring us together here today.

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