

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ON PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE REDUCTION AND PREVENTION OF ARMED VIOLENCE (A/RES/63/23)**

**STATEMENT**

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Australia is a strong supporter of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, particularly its emphasis on the important role of women in armed violence reduction and peacebuilding processes. Preventing conflict and instability in the Asia-Pacific region and globally is a foreign policy priority for Australia. Australian experience has highlighted the central role that development assistance can play in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and stability.

Since 2001, Australia has been an active participant in the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects (UN POA). Australian participation in the UN POA recognises the importance of strong international and regional action to reduce the impact of armed violence on sustainable development, including opportunities for cooperation, assistance and capacity-building.

Australia is committed to multilateral approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation. We will continue our commitment, in partnership with others, to reduce the violence that has a devastating impact on vulnerable societies and provide an opportunity for peace and development to grow.

Many of Australia's major bilateral development programs operate in countries that are vulnerable to, experiencing, or recovering from conflict. Experiences in the Asia-Pacific region have clearly demonstrated the devastating impact that conflict can have on hard-won development gains including achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Australia supports practical efforts to develop goals, targets and measurable indicators on armed violence and development. Armed conflict and other forms of violence also continue to have a particularly harsh impact on women, children and peoples with disabilities.

Australia's Peace, Conflict and Development Policy identifies the clear links between security and development and recognises that illicit weapons are used to undermine stability and development and abuse human rights. Australia's approach is increasingly focused in regional efforts on preventing conflict and building peace. This is complemented by the broader objectives of Australia's aid program to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development, which help strengthen community capacities to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence.

In line with Australia's commitment to UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and UNSCR 1820 (Against Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts) Australia is strongly committed to women's leadership, participation at all levels of the decision-making, and involvement in the implementation of the Geneva Declaration and UN POA. Australia stresses the need to involve women in all implementation processes to sustainably effect a reduction in illicit on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) impacts on development.

Since November 2008, Australia's strategy on addressing the needs of people with disability reflects the Government's commitment to accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Australia is taking a leadership role internationally in raising the profile of disability and development and to establish partnerships in disability-inclusive development. Australia's approach recognises the impacts of exploitation, violence and abuse from illicit SALW on people with disability, including their gender-based aspects.

Australia has a strong track record of responding to conflict-affected communities with development, humanitarian, emergency, and crisis assistance. Working in close concert with broader diplomatic and peacekeeping initiatives, our aid program has helped promote peaceful outcomes to disputes in the Asia-Pacific region, address grievances, provide incentives for peace and protect human rights.

In particular, Australian efforts in Bougainville, Nepal and the Philippines, and our continued commitment in East Timor, Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region include:

- demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants – including child soldiers – into productive civilian life at the end of armed conflict in Nepal, Bougainville and Philippines (Mindanao);
- providing support to the UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) for the development of internationally accepted and validated International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) to provide comprehensive guidance to practitioners and policymakers on small arms control.
- work to engage East Timor in broader security sector reform processes including support to undertake an armed violence reduction baseline assessment;
- broad assistance through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI);
- support for region-wide efforts to combat small arms proliferation including support to the UN Institute for Disarmament Research to identify SALW needs and assistance in the Pacific;
- promotion and assistance with post-conflict reconstruction in Mindanao, Aceh, Cambodia, Bougainville, and Solomon Islands; and
- reform and capacity-building of police, judicial and penal systems in East Timor, Fiji (up until 2006), Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Cambodia, and Papua New Guinea.

As the above demonstrates, Australia remains committed to supporting the practical implementation of the principles contained in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and the Framework of Implementation and the UN POA.