

# **Views of Canada on the Interrelationship between Armed Violence and Development (Pursuant to resolution 63/23)**

## **Executive Summary**

Canada recognizes the relationship between armed violence and development. Insecurity generated by armed violence affects individuals, communities, countries and regions and significantly undermines social and economic development and therefore adversely affects progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. When progress on development stagnates and economic opportunities are limited, the security of communities often declines and criminal activity, conflict and armed violence can increase. Comprehensive, multidimensional policies and programming are required to address such challenges.

Canada's recommendations are as follows:

- Strengthen coordination among diverse institutions that have a role to play in reducing armed violence and promoting development, including national and local governments, public health specialists, international and multilateral organizations, UN agencies and civil society.
- Promote efforts to measure armed violence and to analyze the impact of reductions in armed violence on human development.
- Promote armed violence reduction interventions at the community/local, national, regional and international levels, with a particular focus on how to provide security, and for whom.
- Promote efforts to determine the most effective entry points for armed violence prevention and reduction and to determine ways of integrating armed violence reduction into development frameworks.
- Recognize that a sustainable armed violence prevention and reduction strategy will require not only a reduction of illicit arms; it could also require a transformation of civil-military, state-society, inter-communal relations. Gender impacts should also be considered in this context.

## **Interrelation between Armed Violence and Development**

Insecurity generated by armed violence affects individuals, communities, countries and regions. It significantly undermines social and economic development and therefore adversely affects progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Moreover, armed violence impedes the realization of Canada's thematic development priorities, since it destroys lives and livelihoods, restricts investment and trade, and fuels illicit economies and informal nodes of power. It also imposes significant economic costs in terms of lost productivity and welfare losses that range in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

When progress on development stagnates and economic opportunities are limited, the security of communities often declines and criminal activity, conflict and armed violence can increase. This becomes even more pronounced with rapid urbanization, where small arms are readily available and where the security system is ineffective. The increase in

armed violence can be exacerbated by transnational organized criminal activities within a country, including the transshipment of illegal drugs through a third country from producing to consuming states.

The human and social costs of armed violence are enormous. Comprehensive, multidimensional policies and programming are required in order to address such challenges. While the complex links between armed violence and development are becoming better recognized, much work still remains to be done by the international community in terms of framing appropriate intervention strategies and development responses.

### **Canadian Situation**

Developed countries, including Canada, are not immune to armed violence. In Canada, while crime rates are going down generally, some categories of serious crime have not followed these overall trends. Notable is that the 2007 rate of drug offences was at its highest point in 30 years, while violent youth crime has been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s, and gang-related homicides have been increasing since information was first collected in 1991.

Canada has adopted a series of measures that balance enhanced law enforcement, more effective criminal justice measures, and evidence-based crime prevention to enhance safety and security in all communities, and particularly in urban centres. In Canada, the highest incidence of urban crime occurs in low-income, inner-city cores, and it targets our most vulnerable citizens.

The Canadian National Crime Prevention Strategy provides funding for community-based projects that support interventions with children and youth who are at risk for criminal behaviour, including possible trajectories into violent crime. The Strategy is administered by the National Crime Prevention Centre, a unit within the Canadian Department of Public Safety.

The main approach in this Strategy is to identify model and promising practices based on the scientific evidence of their effectiveness in preventing and reducing crime with specific at-risk groups in the population; work in partnership with community organizations and expert practitioners to implement these practices, recognizing the need to adapt them to local conditions and circumstances; and conduct independent project evaluations.

As a part of the Strategy, the Youth Gang Prevention Fund supports projects in communities where gangs are an existing or emerging problem. These projects, which are ongoing in most major cities and some smaller cities across Canada, are designed to prevent youth from joining gangs or to assist them in exiting gangs.

The National Crime Prevention Centre has also supported the development of tools, nationally and internationally, to assist local communities in addressing their crime and safety issues. An example of such a tool at the international level is the *Guidance on Local Safety Audits: A Compendium of International Practice*. Drawing on knowledge accumulated throughout the world, this document provides guidance to local communities on strategies for identifying safety issues in their communities and putting

in place a systematic process to address those issues in a comprehensive, engaging and integrated manner.

Related, complementary Canadian strategies or programmes include:

- The Tackling Violent Crime Act, which aims to protect Canadians from those who commit serious and violent crimes. It includes measures such as mandatory prison sentences for serious gun crimes and tougher bail provisions for those accused of serious gun crimes, and more effective sentencing and monitoring to prevent dangerous, high-risk offenders from offending again.
- The National Anti-Drug Strategy, which focuses on law enforcement to combat illicit drug production and distribution; education and outreach to prevent usage, especially among youth; and treatment and rehabilitation to assist those with existing dependencies. Expert research, as well as law enforcement intelligence, suggests that drugs are a significant driver of crime patterns in Canada and that their sale provides organized criminal groups with their largest source of illicit earnings.
- The Investments to Combat the Criminal Use of Firearms initiative, which has been helping enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat gun crime, and the smuggling and trafficking of firearms.

## **International Response**

A concerted effort is required by the international community to improve the measurement of armed violence, to determine the most effective entry points for armed violence prevention and reduction, and to integrate armed violence reduction into development frameworks.

Armed violence creates barriers to effective development. An armed violence prevention and reduction (AVR) approach provides development agencies with an opportunity to systematically employ conflict- and AVR-sensitive methods in countries of focus where armed violence is prevalent.

A holistic approach that includes but goes beyond conflict and crime prevention to examining all dimensions of armed violence is desirable. Interventions should respond to locally identified needs and be directed at various levels, including community/local, national, regional and international.

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development has focused attention on the need to move away from a stove-pipe approach to addressing security and development issues towards an integrated approach. It seeks measurable reductions in armed violence. The recent OECD-DAC policy paper on Armed Violence Reduction also makes an important contribution to better understanding the breadth and depth of armed violence issues and entry points for development programming.

In addition to the Geneva Declaration, other agreements and resolutions can support armed violence prevention and reduction, including the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the UN Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and

Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Ottawa Convention on Anti-personnel Landmines, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and UN Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict and women, peace and security. Relevant regional instruments can also contribute to these efforts. A treaty to regulate the legal trade in conventional arms would also support armed violence prevention and reduction efforts. Strengthening and raising the profile of existing principles governing the use of official violence, such as the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, could also help arrest a growing cycle of violence in some cities and countries.

Greater effort is needed to strengthen coordination among diverse institutions that have a role to play in reducing armed violence and promoting development, including national and local governments, public health specialists, international and multilateral organizations, and civil society. An AVR approach demonstrates new opportunities for cooperation across disciplines such as crime prevention, justice and public health.

### **Canadian Action**

Canada is supporting programmes to prevent and reduce armed violence internationally.

Fragile States are especially vulnerable to armed violence. Canada takes a whole-of-government approach to conflict prevention, protection of civilians, and stabilization and reconstruction initiatives in fragile states.

In Haiti, for example, Canada is contributing to community violence reduction by supporting projects which are 1) engaging residents of the Bel-Air neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince in community development, 2) increasing access to education for youth to offer an alternative to street gangs, criminality and violence, and 3) fostering dialogue and good relations between the community and security forces, including the Haitian National Police.

In Southern Sudan, Canada is supporting stability and armed violence reduction through projects aimed at strengthening arms control, community security and Security System Reform. In Eastern Sudan, Canada is supporting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, as well as community security projects to ensure that vulnerable civilian populations also benefit from the dividends of peace. These projects have highlighted the need for governments and international actors to develop thinking and policies regarding the links between DDR, small arms control and post-conflict security provision in ways that enhance individual and community security and reconciliation between competing groups.

Canada has supported a multitude of initiatives to promote implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), to strengthen regional and sub-regional capacity to address the proliferation and misuse of SALW, and to develop guidelines, norms and principles for policies and action on SALW.

Canada has been at the forefront in international policy development on a subset of the armed violence and development agenda, namely the growth of organized urban violence. Canada has collaborated with world leaders in this field to produce a policy-relevant volume in 2007, *Human Security for an Urban Century: Local Challenges*,

*Global Perspectives.* Canada has also worked closely with the Organization of American States to develop its armed violence agenda, and provided direct support to the First Ministerial on Public Security in October 2008. Canada has played a leadership role in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict, and in promoting implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

### **Recommendations**

- Strengthen coordination among diverse institutions that have a role to play in reducing armed violence and promoting development, including national and local governments, public health specialists, international and multilateral organizations, UN agencies and civil society.
- Promote efforts to measure armed violence and to analyze the impact of reductions in armed violence on human development.
- Promote armed violence reduction interventions at the community, national, regional and international levels, with a particular focus on how to provide security, and for whom.
- Promote efforts to determine the most effective entry points for armed violence prevention and reduction and to determine ways of integrating armed violence reduction into development frameworks.
- Recognize that a sustainable armed violence prevention and reduction strategy will require not only a reduction of illicit arms; it could also require a transformation of civil-military, state-society, inter-communal relations. Gender impacts should also be considered in this context.