

The Republic of Croatia strongly supports the aims of UNGA Resolution on promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence (A/RES/23/63) and fully subscribes to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development which it signed in 2008. We welcome the inclusion of this topic on international community's agenda.

The impacts of (armed) violence on economic and social developments and the lack of development as a cause for (armed) violence or armed conflicts are too obvious to be ignored. Other impacts such as environmental degradation, resource depletion and demographic pressure can have destabilizing effects. Spread of arms mostly by illegal means around troubled regions in the world is additional reason for concern. This results too often in humanitarian catastrophe. By reducing and preventing all these factors we are also engaging in implementing of the Millennium Development Goals.

Very often availability of arms in post conflict settings fuel tensions and insecurity and hamper reconciliation and reconstruction efforts resulting in pauperization and in deepening of insecurity which according to one's mind could be regained only by rearming. Resources provided by international donors only target consequences instead of addressing root causes. Many of these reasons which sustain underdevelopment are so intertwined that comprehensive approach is needed.

We would like to highlight the critical role that states and societies must play in preventing and reducing violence: in building democracies and good governance and in promoting culture of tolerance and coexistence. By strengthening national capacity for addressing risk factors, closely cooperating at international and regional level and offering economic incentives and societal empowerment we can more effectively address security and developmental challenges.

The Republic of Croatia as a victim of armed aggression is sensitive to any manifestations of violence and through its membership in the UNSC it is seeking to contribute to conflict prevention and stabilizing vulnerable countries and regions of the world. Croatia was an active member of the UN Peace Building Commission and through its humanitarian and peace building assistance it sought to further the causes for prevention and eradication of violence. In addition to that Croatia is party to all major international and regional mechanisms that regulate use of arms and conduct of armed and police forces.

Our region of South Eastern Europe has come long way in overcoming its violent past: one of the lessons learned is that lack of democracy, unresolved socio-economic problems and non observance of human and minority rights provide fertile ground for the outbreak of violence. As a direct consequence of armed aggression on its territory (occupied territories and displaced persons) and regional instability in early nineties (war in neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina and influx of refugees) Croatian economy and development was negatively affected with its GDP sliding back and recovering only five years after. Regional instabilities further aggravated Croatian economy during the Kosovo crisis due to its dependence on tourism.

In the case of Croatia it was of critical importance that the issue of reintegration of formerly occupied territories that generated violence and instability was followed by process of disarmament and demobilization and that the regional framework for limitation of arms was created. Apart from setting very ambitious political goal for joining the EU and NATO Croatia undertook many initiatives such as:

- Judicial reform and harmonization with EU legislation
- Capacity development of police and border services
- Capacity development of border services and customs to stop illicit trafficking in persons and arms
- Mine Action programmes to clear explosive remnants of war and help mine victims
- 1996-1997 UN assisted weapons collection in Eastern Slavonia resulted in collection of more than 10,000 pieces of small arms and light weapons.
- 2001-2002 Ministry of Interior implemented weapons collection programme, *Farewell to Arms* which resulted in more than 6,000 firearms collected and various pieces of ammunition.
- 2007-2009 voluntary weapons collection Less Arms, Less Tragedies that resulted in 25,153 illegal weapons.
- Implementation of Safer Community Projects and community policing
- Training and education in violence prevention including youth offenders in the judicial system.
- Destruction for Development project which will use funds generated by the recycling of metal from surplus heavy weapons in the Ministry of Defence, for local community safety projects in underdeveloped areas of the country.

These programs are being implemented through coordinate efforts including various Ministries, local government and civil society. The overall aim is to improve human security, while simultaneously working to stimulate local development and economic growth. As the example has shown to us investments in improving public security (such as community policing and disposition of the arms) and in communications infrastructure are correlated with reductions in violence and poverty.

In addition to these efforts Croatia fully supports other multilateral efforts to address issues related to armed violence including, but not limited to:

- Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development
- Anti-Personal Mine Ban Treaty
- Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
- Convention on Cluster Munitions
- Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Firearms Protocol
- UN Programme of Action on SALW
- International Instrument to Identify and Trace illicit SALW
- Arms Trade Treaty

Croatia is currently addressing issues such as communal security with the assistance of the UN and financial support of the Spanish MDG Achievement Fund by implementing an interdisciplinary effort to increase human security and development in areas of special state concern.

Based on the experience of the Republic of Croatia, we recommend that the international community deepen its engagement on addressing the linkages between development and violence.

The Republic of Croatia recommends strengthening coordination and UN agency planning and deepening of co-operation with other international bodies and agencies active on the ground to respond effectively to the root causes of violence.