

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE REDUCTION AND PREVENTION OF ARMED VIOLENCE

Submission by the Republic of Ghana

A 2008 UN General Assembly Resolution 63/23 "Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence", calls upon Member States to send their views on armed violence and development to the UN Secretary-General, so that he can compile a report to be published in November 2009.

The resolution is the latest stage in the process started by the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which recognizes the strong connection between preventing armed violence and promoting socio-economic and political development. To date, 103 States including Ghana (2006) have signed the Geneva Declaration.

Coming from the West African sub-region, which over the last decade has witnessed protracted conflicts and brutal armed violence that has retarded its development, Ghana is enormously interested in the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.

The goals and initiatives contained in the *Geneva Declaration* are therefore reflected in several instruments addressing the issue of armed violence, crime and development, with some being addressed in Ghana's development.

Ghana is affected by the existence of illicit small arms and light weapons, both in the country and in the sub-region, which from time to time contribute negatively for safety and security of the people. The availability and proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the main factors fuelling crime, inter-ethnic conflicts and under-development in Ghana as evidenced in parts of the country.

The opportunity lost to development cannot be over emphasized this is exemplified by the additional investment in keeping the peace which diverts resources which could be better used for social and infrastructural development, or the loss of education opportunity or medical accessibility due to the wariness of teachers and, nurses, doctors of conflict prone communities is not lost on us. Therefore, we recognize that there is a clear link between armed violence and sustainable development in our country.

Armed violence pose immediate negative consequences to the social and economic life of a country by giving internal and external perception that the country is insecure to freedom of movement of people and goods as well as deter investments. Indeed, armed assaults committed by criminals and malcontents destroy economic and social infrastructure. In these criminal acts, people are killed and injured, further burdening society.

We share the position that:

- The problem of armed violence needs to be measured so that action can be taken to reduce it;
- Programmes on armed violence prevention and reduction need to be integrated as key elements of national and local development strategy and planning;
- International protocols and agreements should be strengthened to address the supply side of the of arms trade industry with equal tenacity as the demand-sided interventions.
- Sufficient aid must be committed, in addition to existing funding, in order to allow the Governments to act effectively on armed violence and development.

Ghana shares the view that the global action to prevent and reduce armed violence in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should consider the following:

- Reinforce Security Sector Reform and its democratization.
- Improving measurement of armed violence and armed conflict susceptibility.
- Integrating armed violence prevention and reduction with development programming to address common root causes.
- Encourage joint government and civil society initiatives that address armed violence reduction/prevention and development,
- Compliance with international agreements aimed at or relevant for armed violence prevention and reduction.
- Ensuring adequate official development assistance directed to the combined programmes of armed violence reduction and development.
- Strengthen international and regional instruments on arms control in particular those addressing armed violence.

Achieving these strategic goals will require a more coherent approach to support Member States across the UN system, including existing coordination mechanisms such as the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), Inter-Agency Standing Committee, etc., but also engaging the major UN implementing agencies, and the International Finance Institutions.

National programming is central to achieve measurable reductions in armed violence by 2015. Strategies need to be preventive and dynamic, able to respond to changing situation. Strategies should address immediate risk factors in armed violence (such as arms availability), but should also address more structural factors to prevent violence and conflict from starting.

Some examples of Ghana's commitment to prevent reduce and combat the armed violence promoting development

- Since 1995, soon after the General Peace Agreement, the Ghana Government in strong collaboration with its civil society organizations is engaged in activities of arm collection and destructions,
- Ghana is one of the first (2006) signatory of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development,

- Ghana actively participated in the UN Conference to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in all its aspects held in 2001 which adopted the UNPoA.
- Ghana has established the National Commission on Small arms to control and sensitize citizens on the threats arms pose to the development of communities and the nation as a whole on a regular basis.
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- Ghana has gone through a national participatory process to develop a holistic draft strategic National action plan to combat the proliferation of small arms.
- Ghana has reinforced the national Firearms Registry by using ICT (1.developed and installed a customized software for arms registration.2. providing a LAN capability to its regional police HQs, and provision of computer equipments inter alia) to enhance the registration and sharing of data among the security sector on firearms incidents, importers, retailers and owners.
- Ghana has also taken steps to improve the control of legitimate arms from leakages by undertaking capacity-building for all managers of arms stockpiles and conducts regularly the public destruction of all illicit stockpiles that have been seized, or confiscated.
- Ghana is undertaking a legal review of all its gun-related laws with the aim of bringing it in line with the current assessed realities of the country and in harmony with conventions, protocols and agreements it has acceded to.
- The Government of Ghana has also engaged with local blacksmiths by assisting them to form collective bodies. The Government then has engaged in the development and implementation of alternative livelihood plans and capacity-building training.

Accra, May 29, 2009