



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies**

67-09/303.10

La Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies présente ses compliments au Bureau des affaires de désarmement et, se référant à sa note verbale (ref. ODA/12-2009/AVPP) concernant la résolution A/63/23 intitulée «Promotion du développement par le biais de la réduction et de la prévention de la violence armée», a l'honneur de transmettre les vues de la Suisse en application du paragraphe 2 de cette dernière.

La Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies saisit cette occasion pour renouveler au Bureau des affaires de désarmement l'assurance de sa haute considération.

New York, le 27 mai 2009



Bureau des affaires de désarmement  
Organisation des Nations Unies  
S-3170A

New York, NY 10017



Bern, 28 May 2009

---

# Interrelations between armed violence and development

Report submitted by Switzerland to the United Nations, pursuant to Resolution A/RES/63/23 ("Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence")

---

## Executive Summary

Switzerland welcomes the growing international awareness that armed violence constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development and ultimately the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The costs of armed violence are significant, and range from the costs associated with death, injury and damage to property, through the increased burden on the law enforcement and justice sector, to the disruption of social services, economic opportunities and the undermining of governance structures. At the same time the context of underdevelopment may itself be conducive to violence and conflict.

In view of the upcoming UNSG report, Switzerland presents the following recommendations that the Secretary-General may wish to consider:

- To propose a definition of armed violence that takes into account the negative impact such violence has on sustainable development
- To promote UN leadership in ensuring coordinated and multi-sectoral approaches
- To encourage national governments and the international community to develop whole-of-government/whole-of-system approaches to help reduce armed violence in conflict and non-conflict settings
- To deepen evidence- and data-driven approaches
- To develop key quantitative indicators serving as a base against which to set targets and measurable goals on armed violence and development
- To encourage stakeholders to increase levels of technical and financial support for programs

## 1. Introduction

The interrelations between armed violence and development are complex, with armed violence undermining development prospects, and underdevelopment and inequality fuelling armed violence. Expressions of armed violence range from large-scale conflict and war to intercommunal and collective violence, organized criminal and economically motivated violence, political violence by different actors or groups competing for power, sexual and gender-based violence, and interpersonal violence. Overall, according to recent research, more than 740,000 men, women and children die around the world each year as a result of armed violence. While it is generally perceived that armed violence occurs predominantly in conflict settings, recent studies have shown that a vast majority of deaths—490,000 persons killed each year—occur in non-conflict scenarios.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, the large majority of fatal and non-fatal injuries occur in low and medium-income countries. On average, these countries have a violence mortality rate that is two-and-a-half times higher than that of developed countries.<sup>2</sup>

As armed violence is both a cause and a consequence of underdevelopment, there is growing consensus among the international community that it constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development and ultimately the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The combination of armed violence and underdevelopment may thus constitute a negative spiral that triggers more violence and raises yet further constraints on the development prospects of societies. Switzerland is therefore convinced that a holistic approach is key to successfully reducing armed violence as well as to enabling sustainable development.

The costs of armed violence are significant, and range from the costs associated with death, injury and damage to property, through the increased burden on the law enforcement and justice sector, to the undermining of governance structures as well as the disruption of social services and economic opportunities. In some particularly affected countries, the economic costs of armed violence regularly amount to as much as 15% of the country's gross domestic product.<sup>3</sup>

So far no universal definition of armed violence exists. In terms of international standard-setting, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, a diplomatic initiative launched in 2006, as well as the OECD-DAC guidelines on armed violence reduction (AVR), have developed possible definitions which may serve as a basis for international discussions. The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development considers armed violence to be *the intentional use of illegitimate force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives, against a person, group, community, or state, that undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development*. The OECD-DAC applies a narrower definition and refers to armed violence as *the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death or psychological harm, which undermines development*. Currently, there is no generally accepted definition of armed violence at UN level. The adoption of a definition could help the international community to address the phenomenon in a coherent way.

## 2. Forms of armed violence in Switzerland

While generally a stable and peaceful country, Switzerland is not completely immune to armed violence, which occurs predominately in the form of criminal acts—including homicide, physical injury and robbery—in a non-conflict setting.

According to the Swiss Federal Office of the Police (Fedpol), the total number of recorded criminal infractions has decreased since 2004. However, this positive development must be set against a closer look at crime statistics: indeed, the violent crime rate, including homicide, physical injury and robbery has more than doubled since 1994 from 81.8 per 100,000 residents in 1994 (161 homicides,

---

<sup>1</sup> Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, *The Global Burden of Armed Violence*, Geneva: Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, *Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction: A Challenge for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, Geneva: Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.

3612 physical injuries and 1954 robberies per 7'019'019 residents) to 169 per 100,000 residents in 2007 (203 homicides, 9644 physical injuries and 3042 robberies per 7'593'494 residents).<sup>4</sup>

With 203 infractions annually, intentional homicides including attempted homicides remain rare in Switzerland—as indeed, they are throughout most of Western and Central Europe. Yet despite such a low general rate of homicide, Switzerland has a comparatively high rate of homicide within families: Swiss statistics indicate that becoming a victim of a murder or an attempted homicide by a person known to the victim is more probable than becoming a victim to someone unknown.<sup>5</sup>

In 63 per cent of homicides between 2002 and 2007, in which the police identified the weapon used, bladed weapons were used as often as firearms.

Men are more likely to become victims of assault than women, with women accounting for between 11 and 15 per cent of all perpetrators but representing the victims of around a third of all assaults. Firearms seem less likely to be used for assaults than bladed weapons, although data gathering on this issue is not systematic, and the weapon used for an attack often remains unknown.

Finally, as the Swiss government's 2007 report on domestic security indicates,<sup>6</sup> other activities such as human smuggling and drug trafficking, which are often linked to organized crime, should also be borne in mind when addressing the phenomenon of armed violence in Switzerland.

### 3. Swiss arms legislation and international engagement on arms control

In Switzerland's view, stemming the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons through national legislation and international regulation on arms control constitutes an important element of armed violence prevention and reduction.

The legal possession of and trade in small arms and light weapons in Switzerland is governed by federal law.<sup>7</sup> Civilians are permitted to own handguns and other small arms subject to certain restrictions and requirements.<sup>8</sup> These weapons must be stored safely, and in such a way that they cannot be accessed by unauthorized persons. Civilians are—as a general rule—not permitted to own

<sup>4</sup> Federal Department of Justice and Police, *Statistique policière de la criminalité*, online available at [http://www.fedpol.admin.ch/fedpol/fr/home/dokumentation/zahlen\\_und\\_fakten.html](http://www.fedpol.admin.ch/fedpol/fr/home/dokumentation/zahlen_und_fakten.html).

<sup>5</sup> See Killias, Martin, Carine Dillitz and Magaly Bergerioux, 2006, *Familiendrama – ein schweizerischer "Sonderfall"*, Crimiscope, No 33, Lausanne: University of Lausanne. See also Zoder, Isabel, and Garbiela Maurer, 2006, *Tötungsdelikte: Fokus häusliche Gewalt: Polizeilich registrierte Fälle 2000-2004*, Neuchâtel: FSO (Federal Statistical Office).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.fedpol.admin.ch/fedpol/en/home/dokumentation/berichte.html>.

<sup>7</sup> 1. Federal law of 13 December 1996 on war material (*Loi fédérale du 13 décembre 1996 sur le matériel de guerre, LFMG, SR 514.51*) and Ordinance of 25 February 1998 on war material (*Ordonnance du 25 février 1998 sur le matériel de guerre, OMG, RS 514.511*).

2. Federal law of 13 December 1996 on the control of dual-use goods and specific military goods (*Loi fédérale du 13 décembre 1996 sur le contrôle des biens utilisables à des fins civiles et militaires et des biens militaires spécifique, LCB, RS 946.202*) and Ordinance of 25 June 1997 on the export, import and transit of dual-use goods and specific military goods (*Ordonnance du 25 juin 1997 sur le contrôle des biens utilisables à des fins civiles et militaires et des biens militaires spécifique, OCB, RS 946.202.1*).

3. Federal law of 20 June 1997 on weapons, weapon accessories and ammunition (*Loi fédérale du 20 juin 1997 sur les armes, les accessoires d'armes et les munitions, LArm, RS 514.54*) and Ordinance of 2 July 2008 on weapons, weapon accessories and ammunition (*Ordonnance du 2 juillet 2008 sur les armes, les accessoires d'armes et les munitions, OArm, RS 514.541*).

<sup>8</sup> In order to obtain a licence to acquire a firearm, an applicant must fulfill the following requirements, which are in line with the Schengen *acquis* to which Switzerland is a party: a) he or she must be over 18 years of age; b) he or she must not be considered unfit, as a consequence of a mental illness or disability, to acquire the weapon; c) he or she must not have been convicted of a criminal offence. A special licence to carry a weapon in public may be granted, but in this case, in addition to the requirements listed above, the applicant must: d) convince the authorities that he or she needs to carry the weapon in public in order to protect a person or good; e) pass an exam regarding the safe and efficient handling and the legal conditions about the use of the weapon.

fully automatic weapons, and it is forbidden to convert small arms and handguns into semi-automatic or fully-automatic weapons. The import and export of small arms requires a commercial or a non-commercial licence.

All male Swiss citizens are conscripted to the armed forces until at least the age of 30. During their period of service, members of the armed forces store their personal equipment including military-issued personal service weapons (assault rifle or pistol) without ammunition at home. When members of the Swiss armed forces complete their service, there are specific conditions under which they have the right to retain their service weapon.

The export of military small arms and light weapons (war material) requires specific authorization from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in the form of a licence. SECO will decide on applications in agreement with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

Switzerland's export control system takes into account the factors that may contribute to different forms of armed violence, including conflict, crime and repression. When granting a licence to export military small arms and light weapons, the following is taken into account:

- the maintenance of peace, international security and regional stability;
- the situation in the country of destination, in particular with regard to respect for human rights and the non-use of child soldiers;
- the efforts made by Switzerland in the area of development cooperation;
- the conduct of the country of destination towards the international community, in particular with regard to compliance with international law; and
- the attitude of the countries which are participating with Switzerland in international export control regimes.

A licence to export military small arms and light weapons shall not be granted if:

- the country of destination is involved in an internal or international armed conflict;
- the country of destination violates human rights in a systematic and serious manner;
- the country of destination is listed as one of the least developed countries on the current OECD-DAC list of countries in receipt of development aid;
- in the country of destination there is a high risk that the exported weapons will be used against the civilian population; or
- in the country of destination there is a high risk that the exported weapons will be passed on to an undesirable end recipient.

Where a licence is sought to export war material to a non-governmental body, the applicant must demonstrate that the country of final destination has authorized the import (e.g. by issuing an import certificate) or that no such authorisation is required.

While arms control and disarmament is the primary responsibility of individual member states, Switzerland is of the conviction that, it cannot be achieved by the individual state alone, but must be attained through international cooperation. The wider effort can only be sustained through increased international cooperation and adherence to all relevant conventions and agreements. Switzerland is engaged and has been participating in the main international processes to combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in all its aspects, and to ban anti-personnel mines as well as cluster munitions. As a member of the United Nations, it strongly supports the UN Small Arms Programme of Action (2001) and the International Tracing Instrument (2005). Switzerland is a State Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW, 1980), its amended Article 1, and all five CCW protocols. It is also a State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty (1997) and signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008).

Moreover, Switzerland participates in the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and supports the guidelines and best practices established in this framework. It is also a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and, as such, adheres to OSCE agreements on small arms, including the framework OSCE Document (2000). As a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), it has contributed to the development and implementation of practical EAPC programming for small arms reduction and control.

Switzerland actively supports all efforts to establish an Arms Trade Treaty on conventional weapons (ATT) in the framework of the United Nations and is member of the bureau of the Open-Ended Working Group that started its work in 2009.

Furthermore, Switzerland intends to adhere to the 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 (Firearms Protocol). The implementation into national law is planned in due course.

#### **4. Addressing the interrelations between armed violence and development**

There is growing international consensus that armed violence constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development and the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Indeed, more than 20 of the world's 34 poorest countries are affected by or emerging from armed conflict. It is recognized that the states ranking at or near the bottom of the Human Development Index are most often those, that have been directly affected by violent conflict. In recent years, conflict-related armed violence has claimed an average of 52'000 deaths worldwide per year. As this number includes only recorded conflict deaths, it may be too conservative an estimate. The actual number of conflict deaths may thus be much higher. But the human costs of armed conflict extend well beyond these direct deaths: between two and ten times more (depending on the conflict) die every year from non-violent causes such as malnutrition, dysentery, or other easily preventable diseases that were due to the effects of war on populations.<sup>9</sup>

However, a much larger part of deaths from armed violence occur in non-conflict settings: around 490'000 people die directly from non-conflict armed violence every year and an untold number are physically or psychologically injured.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the infliction of physical and psychological harm, armed violence exacts a major economic toll, particularly on the poor and vulnerable segments of society. It creates an environment of general insecurity and criminalization (racketeering, endemic corruption, trafficking of all sorts) that increases the costs of economic transactions, undermines investment, and erodes human capital. Moreover, it can lead to a reallocation of development assistance to less risky environments.

The often-witnessed loss of local confidence in state institutions due to armed violence can lead household communities to resort to informal security measures, including self-defence groups, vigilantism, or the recruitment of local gangs and armed groups for protection. In addition to resulting in additional costs to households, these decentralized measures often further undermine state structures and the rule of law. Generally speaking, excessive formal and informal security spending has considerable macroeconomic costs, as it contributes to "unproductive" expenditures. Research suggests that developing countries may spend between 10 and 15% of their gross domestic product on law enforcement, as compared to around 5% in developed countries.<sup>11</sup>

Fragile states are particularly vulnerable to the scourge of armed violence, which can be both a cause and a consequence of instability. If a state is no longer able to physically control its territory and is in danger of completely losing its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, armed groups often move in to fill the vacuum. Armed violence further reduces the capacity of the state to provide basic services to its citizens and thereby restore its legitimacy. Bearing in mind these interrelations, development policies should include measures to help fragile states to achieve effective, resilient, and legitimate state institutions. International support efforts should be concerted, sustained, and focused on building the relationship between state and society. An international conference organized by the government of Switzerland in March 2009 in association with the OECD, the United Nations, the World Bank, and

---

<sup>9</sup> Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, *Global Burden of Armed Violence*, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, *Armed Violence Prevention and Reduction*, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

NATO, addressed these issues by promoting the establishment of a more coherent, coordinated and complementary (3C) approach to engagement with states affected by fragility and emerging from armed conflict.

In order to effectively address the linkages between armed violence and development, it is crucial to overcome the thinking in silos and the fragmented response by different actors. Hence, an increasing number of states and international actors stress the importance of a whole-of-government and whole-of-system approach as a key element in addressing the challenge of armed violence with a view to enabling sustainable development. Switzerland has invested in a range of intra-governmental coordination mechanisms that are by now well-established. These include inter-ministerial working groups on issues such as anti-personnel mines, small arms and light weapons and security sector reform. In the areas of mine action as well as the combat against the illicit trade in SALW, comprehensive multi-year strategies guiding Switzerland's policy have been adopted.

The specific risk factors associated with the onset and persistence of armed violence are becoming increasingly well understood. Sharp macroeconomic shocks, rising levels of income inequality, the expansion of unemployed youth populations, growing demographic youth 'bulges', horizontal inequalities among groups, as well as persistent political and socio-economic grievances (associated with land distribution, access to political or economic opportunities, and ethnic or religious discrimination) are all related to the occurrence of armed violence.

Policies that are exclusively focused on aspects of either security or development may occlude the close linkages between the two, and are unlikely to generate a lasting peace. Bearing this in mind, UNDP and Switzerland launched a diplomatic initiative in 2006. Currently supported by 106 signatory countries, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development advocates an integrated approach to issues of armed violence and development, and calls upon states to achieve demonstrable reductions in the global burden of armed violence by 2015, centred around three pillars:<sup>12</sup>

- Raising global awareness about the negative impact of armed violence and development, through advocacy, dissemination and coordination;
- Improving the ability to quantify the linkages between armed violence and development by focusing on measurability and monitoring;
- Making a difference on the ground through programming efforts (launched with UNDP), in particular in chosen focus countries.

A number of international fora are increasingly focusing their work on the crucial importance of armed violence reduction and prevention, with a view to achieving the broader goals of state building, peacebuilding and development. The OECD-DAC has a prominent role in this context and Switzerland is actively participating in its efforts to produce standard-setting guidelines for development agencies on how to promote direct and indirect programming to prevent and reduce armed violence.

While often globally felt in its effects, armed violence is a largely sub-national phenomenon, since it is rarely distributed evenly across a country. As a consequence, many successful armed violence reduction activities are crafted at the city or town level by governments with reasonably good institutional capacity and often in partnership with non-governmental agencies and academic institutions. For this reason, Switzerland supports armed violence prevention and reduction efforts in different local contexts.

Switzerland is convinced that poverty reduction, as well as the promotion of human security and the mitigation of security risks, are crucial components of efforts designed to achieve sustainable development. Thorough context analysis taking armed violence into consideration is a prerequisite for deciding how the mainstreaming of armed violence prevention and reduction into national and international development policies should be dealt with. According to the local context and its

---

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.genevadeclaration.org>.

comparative advantages, Switzerland decides where and how support to armed violence prevention should be provided. There is growing recognition that ethnic and cultural polarization, marginalization and economic instability not only have serious implications for individuals living on those territories, but may also have repercussions for neighbouring countries and indeed globally. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has thus shaped its development policies accordingly and follows a conflict-sensitive programme management approach in its field-related work. It offers specific support for selected regions grappling with fragile state institutions, conflict, and threats to security.

The last 20 years have witnessed a growing international effort and commitment to civilian peacebuilding, both in multilateral and bilateral frameworks. Research suggests that international peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations are among the main drivers for the post Cold War decline in armed conflicts worldwide.<sup>13</sup> Bearing in mind the changing security environment, Switzerland has developed a toolbox of civilian peacebuilding instruments. These tools range from providing expertise and know-how for mediation and facilitation efforts to geographically and thematically targeted programmes for civilian conflict handling, to the launch of diplomatic initiatives as well as strategic partnerships with international organisations, like-minded states and stakeholders from academia and business.

Finally, the secondment of experts offers an excellent tool for capacity-building and assistance. Several expert pools offer the possibility to mobilize specialists for limited-term assignments on the ground. The Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peace Promotion (SEP) provides expertise for international peacebuilding missions, namely in the areas of security sector reform and the reform of the police. The Small Arms and Ammunition Experts Pool (SAEP) focuses on SALW, as well as ammunition stockpile management, destruction and disposal.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Switzerland welcomes the growing international awareness that armed violence constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development and ultimately the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The costs of armed violence are significant, and range from the costs associated with death, injury and damage to property, through the increased burden on the law enforcement and justice sector, to the undermining of governance structures as well as the disruption of social services and economic opportunities. At the same time the context of underdevelopment may itself be conducive to violence and conflict.

Considering the paramount importance of the United Nations in the promotion of world peace and security, as well as in the achievement of sustainable development, the UN has a crucial role to play in the context of armed violence and development.

Further work is required in support of policy-makers and operational staff. Hence, Switzerland presents the following recommendations that the UN Secretary-General may wish to consider in view of the upcoming report:

- To propose a definition of armed violence that takes into account the negative impact such violence has on sustainable development
- To promote UN leadership in ensuring coordinated and multi-sectoral approaches that address the interrelations between armed violence and development
- To encourage national governments and the international community to develop whole-of-government/whole-of-system approaches to help reduce armed violence in conflict and non-conflict settings, by integrating armed violence prevention and reduction into broader development strategies and by strengthening mechanisms for donor coordination in

---

<sup>13</sup> Human Security Report Project, 2005, *Human Security Report 2005*, online available at [http://www.humansecurityreport.info/HSR2005\\_PDF/Part5.pdf](http://www.humansecurityreport.info/HSR2005_PDF/Part5.pdf), p. 148.

developing countries

- To deepen evidence- and data-driven approaches which allow to better gauge and qualitatively demonstrate the types and extent of the linkages between armed violence and development, and to guide the development of policies and programs
- To develop key quantitative indicators serving as a base against which to set targets and measurable goals on armed violence and development, with a view to integrating armed violence prevention and reduction into a possible follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals
- To encourage stakeholders to increase levels of technical and financial support for programs aimed at the prevention and reduction of armed violence as well as the promotion of sustainable development.