

**The Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects**

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**Thematic Discussion on Small Arms and Human Development**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Administrator, may I thank you for inviting UNDP to contribute to this thematic discussion on small arms and human development.

The lethal interaction between poverty, violent conflict and crime and small arms availability and misuse is a significant challenge that requires action from both the disarmament and development communities.

With offices in more than 160 countries UNDP witnesses everyday how armed violence destroys the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people, while at the same time producing a vicious cycle of insecurity, fear and want.

This year – 2005 – is a critical moment for the international community and UN member states. In the Secretary General's report "In Larger Freedom" he notes that "the accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious threat to peace, stability and development" and he calls for a renewed approach to tackling the challenges of security and development.

For the development community, the failure to curb the global scourge of small arms proliferation and misuse means that they continue to fuel inter-personal and gang violence, organized crime, civil wars and inter-state conflict.

The persistence of small arms-related violence in its many forms has catastrophic consequences for human development.

Many of the world's poorest countries today are affected by armed conflict and crime which exacerbate poverty, disease and malnutrition, inhibit access to social services and divert energy and resources away from efforts to improve human development.

This thematic debate could not be happening at a more opportune time. It indicates the development and disarmament community's willingness to coordinate better approaches in addressing small arms issues.

Indeed, since the last Biennial Meeting in 2003 there has been increased collaboration between development agencies, governments and civil society

to understand better the causes of armed violence and to integrate small arms issues into development programming.

The UN Programme of Action on small arms makes only limited references to the issue of human development.

In **Preambular paragraph 2** States express concern that the *illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels*".

In **Section III, paragraph 17**, States are encouraged to make *'greater efforts to address problems related to human and sustainable development'* thus reemphasizing the link between development and small arms.

However, since 2001 our understanding of the impact of small arms availability and misuse on development has increased considerably. We now have a large and growing body of evidence from many parts of the world which highlights the many different ways in which gun violence can threaten, or undermine, a country's development prospects.

On Wednesday this week, UNDP launched a new publication 'Securing Development' which provides information on how small arms availability and misuse impact on development, and how the incidence of armed violence, whether in situations of crime or conflict, can undermine the achievement of the MDGs. It also includes details of UNDP's experience and lessons learned in providing support to addressing small arms related issues in more than 40 countries worldwide.

Even if the Programme of Action is implemented effectively at global, regional and national levels, the human suffering caused by small arms related violence will not end. In addition to focusing on the supply of small arms, which the Programme of Action already does fairly well, we need to focus on those factors or conditions which prompt people to acquire and misuse small arms. This of course means addressing issues such as poverty, human rights, governance and human security. It also means that we have to address the wide range of negative impacts associated with the availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Some of these small arms related issues cannot be adequately addressed within the framework of the Programme of Action in its current form, and therefore need to be addressed in other frameworks. At UNDP we believe that the most effective way to address small arms issues in a comprehensive fashion is to identify them as a national priority, and then incorporate them into national development frameworks, including PRSPs and CCA/UNDAFs.

By using national development frameworks, governments are able to allocate resources in a transparent and systematic way to address the issue of small arms availability and misuse. It also makes it easier for bilateral and multilateral donors to provide resources to help address these issues.

UNDP remains committed to supporting countries to address the scourge of gun violence, thereby helping to promote human development, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.