

IANSA position paper: Sustainable development and small arms control*

Armed violence creates poverty and helps perpetuate it. Twenty-two of the world's 34 poorest countries are engaged in or emerging from armed conflict. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, armed violence is the leading single cause of hunger.

The World Health Organisation estimates that for every person killed by a gun, three others are injured. The extreme trauma of firearms injuries can render survivors unable to walk in societies where the infrastructure is unable to provide assistance with mobility. Young men who should be in their productive prime are the most common perpetrators and victims of small arms violence. Violence cost El Salvador US \$1.7 billion in 2003, which is the equivalent of 5% of GDP, and more than twice as much as the country spends on health and education combined.

Insecurity deters investment, aggravates economic and social exclusion, undermines good governance, places heavy burden on social services and diverts resources from development to security. The fear of armed violence can be debilitating to an economy. For example, in 2001 the South African police budget exceeded the health budget, in a country ravaged by HIV/AIDS. A survey of 69 companies by the World Bank in 2001 found that armed insecurity ranked as the greatest risk facing investors.

How does the Programme of Action (PoA) address the problem?

In the opening declarative statements of the PoA, States agreed that small arms pose a 'serious threat to... stability and sustainable development' (paragraph 2), acknowledging that development is one dimension of the multifaceted problem (paragraph 15).

Sustainable development is referred to only once in the operative provisions, when States agree to:

address problems related to human and sustainable development, taking into account existing and future social and developmental activities, and should fully respect the rights of the States concerned to establish priorities in their development programs. (III.17)

How the problems related to human and sustainable development might be addressed is not elaborated. The 2006 Small Arms Review Conference (RevCon) presents an opportunity to develop this dimension.

Progress since 2001

Global progress

The link between security and development has become explicit at the UN level since 2001. It is now recognised that small arms proliferation and misuse hinders development, and that development agencies need to become more involved in addressing the problem. In his 2005 report *In Larger Freedom*, the UN Secretary General observed that 'the accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious threat to peace, stability and sustainable development.'

At the 2005 World Summit, every Head of State acknowledged the clear link between security and development: 'peace and security, development and human rights ... are interlinked and mutually reinforcing ... and the foundations for collective security and well being'.

The 2005 UN General Assembly resolution on the humanitarian and development impacts of small arms noted that the World Summit had affirmed the links between security, development and small arms control.

* For reasons of style only, the terms 'weapons', 'small arms' and 'firearms' are used interchangeably in this paper. All these terms more properly refer to 'small arms and light weapons (SALW)'. These are weapons that can be carried and used by one or two people, including handguns, assault rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-tank or anti-aircraft guns and light mortars. Light weapons, ammunition, grenades, landmines, and explosives are also part of this category.

The resolution further noted that the RevCon ‘represents an opportunity to address interconnected peace and security and development challenges, which are relevant to the agenda of the said conference’ and agreed on

Developing, where appropriate, comprehensive armed violence prevention programs integrated into national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies;

Systematically including national measures to regulate small arms and light weapons in longer term post-conflict peacebuilding strategies and programs;

This groundbreaking resolution incorporated development and humanitarian angles into the UN small arms debate, which had previously been dominated by national security concerns.

Regional and national progress

Sustainable development has become a consideration in arms exporting regimes in recent years. Several of the most significant groups of arms-exporting States have agreed in principle to prevent arms transfers where the value of the transfers would significantly hinder sustainable development of the recipient state.

For example, in the **Wassenaar Arrangement Best Practice Guidelines for Small Arms** (2002), States agree to take into account

the nature and cost of the arms to be transferred in relation to the circumstances of the recipient country, including its legitimate security and defence needs and the objective of the least diversion for armaments of human and economic resources.

This requirement has also been agreed in the **OSCE Document on Small Arms** (2000).

The European Union requires detailed consideration of the possibility that an arms export is likely to hinder the development of a recipient state, through a procedure outlined in the 2005 guidelines for implementing Criterion 8 of the **EU Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers**. The procedure, covering all arms (not just small arms), is used to identify transfers whose monetary value is high enough to be of concern for the government development agency, which can then be consulted on the transfer.

Among national governments that have taken a lead on this topic, the Netherlands and the UK have a policy of consulting their development agencies before authorising international arms transfers.

However, a system triggered by concern about the diversion of significant human or economic resources in the recipient country will generally allow transfers of small arms to proceed without scrutiny, because the monetary value of small arms is very low compared with large weapons such as tanks or bombers. With international small arms transfers it is the potential **misuse** of such weapons that hinders sustainable development, not the monetary value of the transfer.

IANSA recommendations to States:

- **Prohibit international transfers of small arms & light weapons where their likely misuse would hinder the sustainable development in either the recipient state or another state.**

At present, if development agencies are consulted at all in arms transfers, it is likely to be for ‘high-value’ international arms transfers, which significantly divert human or economic resources from a recipient state. This is not a suitable criterion for small arms transfers, which have a low value and high risk of diversion relative to larger conventional arms. Since small arms readily cross borders, the risk of misuse should also take into account any other state to which diversion is likely.

- **Integrate armed violence reduction programs into development frameworks.**

Building on the OECD DAC guidelines, reducing small arms availability and misuse should be an integral part of poverty reduction measures. Where poverty drives people into occupations requiring weapons (eg the drug trade or cattle rustling), Governments and donors must promote alternative livelihoods and try to change attitudes towards gun ownership.

Development agencies can become far more involved in tackling the small arms problem. For example, the UK’s Department for International Development is working on reducing demand for small arms through its Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative, and is consulted in arms export decisions if the deal might have an impact on sustainable development.

- **Identify armed violence as a significant obstacle to development in Poverty Reduction Strategy papers and UN Development Assistance Frameworks.**

The World Bank and other International Finance Institutions should support the inclusion of armed violence reduction programs in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers written by States. Inclusion of armed violence reduction strategies into the PRS process would allow the small arms programs of these States to be eligible for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Country's Initiative and loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- **Require UN peacebuilding strategies to include weapons collection and destruction, stockpile management, adequate national arms regulation and the prevention of illicit transfers of small arms & light weapons.**

This recommendation builds upon the 2005 UN General Assembly resolution on humanitarian and development impact of small arms.

- **Encourage the proposed UN Peacebuilding Commission to prioritise weapons collection and destruction, stockpile management, adequate national arms regulation and the prevention of illicit transfers of small arms & light weapons, and facilitate long-term donor commitment to post-conflict States.**

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document authorised the creation of a new UN Peacebuilding Commission. The Commission is charged with coordinating peacebuilding efforts, and it should fully incorporate the 2005 General Assembly resolution on the humanitarian and development impacts of small arms.

The Commission should also ensure that donor commitment extends beyond the initial two years of recovery, by introducing predictable, multi-year aid agreements in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005).

The Outcome Document also mandated the creation of a voluntary funded, multi-year standing Peacebuilding Fund, to support the work of the proposed UN Peacebuilding Commission. This needs to be well-resourced and capable of mobilising sufficient resources promptly.