



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

## Policy Statement on SALW related Violence and the Millennium Development Goals

The General Assembly of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting in the Swedish Parliament, Stockholm, December 15, 2012

In New York in September 2000, the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing their governments and nations to develop a new global partnership in order to reduce poverty all over the world. By setting a series of eight time-bound and quantified targets, with a deadline of 2015, they established what has been come to known as the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs).

The Millennium Development Goals set the framework for addressing extreme poverty in all its dimensions, ranging from income poverty and hunger to disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion. At the same time, they promote gender equality, education and environmental sustainability and represent basic human rights in relation to health and education. The Goals' stated objective is to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and at the same time to halve the proportion of people who do not have access to clean drinking water.<sup>1</sup>

The progress is measured with the help of concrete indicators.<sup>2</sup> Monitoring will thus be guided by taking the following eight factors into account: poverty and hunger (MDG1), universal primary education (MDG2), gender equality (MDG3), child mortality (MDG4), maternal health (MDG5), HIV/Aids and other diseases (MDG6), environmental sustainability (MDG7) and global partnership (MDG8).

Working towards the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals has ever since been on the top of the agenda of international organizations, governments and NGOs.<sup>3</sup> Low levels of development

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<sup>1</sup> See the *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, 2000

<sup>2</sup> For a list of all 21 targets and 60 indicators, see the *Official List of MDG Indicators*, 2008, available at: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/host.aspx?Content=indicators/officiallist.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The international community has increasingly become aware of the interrelations between armed violence and development. Organizations giving top priority to the topic include amongst others the United Nations

pose a severe threat to the well-being and health of individuals and undermines basic human rights. Reaching the *Millennium Development Goals* is thus of utmost importance.

Working towards the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals means at the same time working against armed violence.<sup>4</sup> Although important progress has been made during the last years, areas affected by armed conflict and armed criminal or social violence are mostly off track. Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) related violence can be seen as both a cause and a consequence of low levels of development and inequality. Risk factors harming development are often also associated with shaping the patterns of armed violence. As pointed out by experts working on the Oslo Conference on Armed Violence, “these factors include weak public institutions, systemic economic and horizontal inequalities, persistent exclusion of minority groups, highly unequal gender relations, limited educational opportunities, high rates of unemployment, the presence of organized crime and illicit markets, and the availability of illegal firearms and drugs”.<sup>5</sup>

This has concrete implications for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. The higher the level of lethal violence recorded in a country, the lower is usually the level of development. Translated into the concrete MDG indicators, research has shown that armed violence has severe negative impacts on all of them. Armed violence leads not only to the direct loss of life, but also to unemployment and the disruption of internal trade and markets and thus contributes to poverty and hunger (MDG1). It undermines the efforts to achieve primary schooling by directly destroying schools and disrupting schooling procedures, especially for girls (MDG2). It includes gender-based and sexual violence, expanded workloads for women and the increase in women-headed households and thus works against gender equality (MDG3). As it further undermines health-care services and medical facilities by forcing resources into emergency relief rather than long-term health care, it directly affects child and maternal mortality (MDG 4 and 5).

Furthermore, it undermines the reduction and prevention of HIV/Aids and other diseases, as it is related to increased sexual violence and prostitution (MDG6). Finally, armed violence endangers environmental sustainability by producing migration flows and displacement and by disrupting infrastructure (MDG7). Regarding the eighth and last development goal, global partnership (MDG8), it should be noted that both the *Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)*, to be negotiated in March 2013, and the *UN Programme of Action (PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* are of utmost importance in order to support the fulfilment of the MDGs.

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Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank, the World Health Organizations (WHO) as well as the Geneva Declaration Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> Armed violence is hereby defined as „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 human development“. It excludes self-inflicted violence (Geneva Declaration Secretariat: 2011). Note that hereafter – if not mentioned otherwise the term „armed violence“ and „SALW related violence“ are used interchangeably.

<sup>5</sup> *Measuring and Monitoring Armed Violence – Goals, Targets and Indicators*. Background Paper: Oslo Conference on Armed Violence. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2011, p. 5

Apart from the direct impacts on human development, armed violence, and especially large-scale armed conflict, contributes to state weakness and leads in the worst case to state collapse. As the OECD-DAC's International Network on Conflict and Fragility points out, "external and internal risk factors, alongside the continuum of conflict, armed violence and insecurity makes the MDGs more difficult to achieve".<sup>6</sup> In this context, it should be noted that although the *Millennium Declaration* includes a whole section on *Peace, Security and Disarmament*, those matters are not considered in the actual Millennium Development Goals. This represents a problematic lack, since security and development related issues are closely linked to each other.

By now, the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals lies only two years ahead of us. Although some progress has been made, achieving the Goals by 2015 poses a huge challenge to the international community. As the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2012* points out, a number of goals are far from being reached. In relation to the impacts of armed violence on the MDGs, it is particularly concerning to see the severe consequences following from the misuse of SALW.

It is high time to recall the importance of reaching the Millennium Development Goals for human development and security worldwide. At the same time it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the negative impact of SALW related violence on reaching the goals by 2015 and beyond as well as to unite efforts, capacities and resources in order to effectively reduce and prevent armed violence.

## *Objectives*

### **The General Assembly of the Parliamentary Forum of Small Arms and Light Weapons, meeting in the Swedish Parliament, Stockholm, on December 15, 2012;**

*Recognizes* that SALW related violence poses severe obstacles for reaching all Millennium Development Goals by 2015;

*Stresses* the importance to unify and strengthen all efforts put forward to reach the Goals by its deadline 2015 in order to guarantee basic levels of human development, security and human rights;

*Emphasizes* the fact that SALW related violence has direct impacts on the Millennium Development Goals and that it further contributes to the weakening of state structures and thus also indirectly undermines the path towards reaching the MDGs;

*Promotes* the inclusion of security, disarmament and armed violence concerns in the post-MDG framework in order to adequately address the development-security nexus;

*Urges* its members and all parliamentarians to ensure that reaching the Millennium Development Goals is on the top of the political agenda of their countries and that the interrelations between

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<sup>66</sup> OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 2010, *Accelerating Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals in Countries Affected by Conflict, Violence and Insecurity*

armed violence and human development are adequately addressed within the policy, legislative and budget work of their respective parliaments;

*Encourages* its members further to raise awareness in their respective parliaments about the urgency of the matter, to oversee their governments work and to investigate the progress made in their respective countries using national targets and indicators as proposed by UN in order to measure the success or failure of the implementation process and, if necessary, promote corrections within their parliaments;

*Asks* its members in addition to work closely together with the media, civil society and other important actors, which help to raise awareness for the urgency of the issue.

*Calls* on governance in all arms exporting countries not to allow any export to areas of conflict, neither to governments nor to non-state actors.

*Recalls* that reducing and preventing SALW related violence is not only of immediate importance now, but of utmost relevance in order to promote and guarantee human development and security beyond the MDG deadline of 2015;

*Mandates* its members, the board and the secretariat to work together and be unified on the issue with the clear goal of making progress within the next two years until 2015;