

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN ASIA PACIFIC
TO REDUCE ARMED VIOLENCE AND PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT**

Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence & Development, Regional Review Conference,
Manila, the Philippines, 8-9 October

In the past decade, Asia Pacific has experienced unprecedented development and growth. The region is home to numerous protracted sub-national conflicts as well as regional territorial disputes, which in turn fan national unrest. It also faces resource-based violence, identity-based struggles for self-determination, ethnic violence, extremism and terrorism.

The widening of inequality across Asia Pacific is deeply influenced by armed conflict and various forms of violence. Be it criminally, economically or politically motivated, armed violence destroys the fabric of society, creates fear, disables development and creates inequality in access to basic services and human rights. Armed violence creates impoverished regions and communities, unable to access the dividends of growth. The inequality gap in turn becomes a driver of the vicious cycles of violence.

The following recommendations from civil society actors in Asia Pacific seek to address the symptoms and drivers of armed violence, towards promoting equitable development within and across nations.

TOOLS OF VIOLENCE

- We call on States to advance robust national legislation that limits the availability and potential misuse of small arms, and targets licit and illicit weapons supply and demand.
- We recognise the critical need to implement and report on international instruments promoting the control, management and trade of weapons and ammunition including the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and thereby the establishment of national commissions on SALWs. We also call on countries to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty without delay, and to fully comply with all disarmament and arms control commitments.

INSTITUTIONS

- We call on government institutions involved in security and justice provision, home affairs, and local administrations to build trust and transparency in their provision of services and develop clear mandates to structurally prevent armed violence, informed by evidence-based analysis.
- We encourage national to local authorities to regularly collect data to inform early warning systems on armed conflict and violence.¹ Efforts should also be made to engage community actors in dialogue, to promote cultures of peace and tackles social norms which promote violence.
- We call on governments to re-allocate investments in arms, military and security sector spending to support human development, addressing equality gaps within nations of this region.
- We encourage governments in Asia Pacific and secretariats of regional bodies – including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Pacific Islands Forum – to advance regional cooperation and knowledge sharing on armed violence reduction and prevention best practices. Efforts should promote:
 - Cooperation to tackle drivers of violence including transnational criminal networks, human and drug trafficking.
 - The harmonisation of national arms regulations to ensure countries are not undermined by neighbouring countries with weaker controls.
 - The regional monitoring of licit and illicit arms trade.

GENDER

- We call on all States to implement the Women, Peace & Security agenda including through policies or action plans which underline the importance of women's participation at all levels of decision-making for peace, security and armed violence reduction efforts, as

¹ Data disaggregation should include sex, age, injury/impairment, means used to commit violence, geographic location, motivation, and nationality and/or ethnicity and religion if contextually relevant.



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well as the mainstreaming of gender in wider national policy and practices associated with these domains.

- Recognising that men account for disproportionately high numbers of perpetrators, as well as direct victims of armed violence, we call on States and non-government actors to promote social and cultural norms that transform negative masculinities, which associate power with arms and militarism, further perpetuating gender inequalities.

YOUTH

- We call on States and non-government groups to target youths with inclusive education opportunities, with peace education built into curriculums, skills training for livelihoods, and to engage youths in policy making on armed violence reduction and prevention. Awareness raising should also target youths on ways to engage in responsible and accountable use of social media to prevent behaviours, such as hate speech, which catalyse violence.

SURVIVORS & VICTIMS

- We call for institutional and non-discriminatory approaches to policy and service provision to address the needs and protect the rights of victims and survivors of armed violence – across the areas of health, justice and social and economic inclusion – including support to caregivers and their families.

POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

- States and other international actors should support a post-2015 development framework with a goal on peaceful societies. Support for this goal should cut across other aspects of the framework, and include supporting targets to:
 - Advance a measurable reduction in violent deaths and the numbers of people injured by violence.
 - Reduce external stresses, including transnational organised crime, corruption, bribery, the irresponsible trafficking of arms and other commodities that fuel violence and conflict, and illicit financial flows.
 - Strengthen institutions, as well as public confidence in institutions, access to justice and the protection of human rights.
 - The global agenda for peaceful societies should link to gender equality targets and indicators for mainstreaming gender across the framework.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR AVRVP

- We call on all actors in the region to increase collection of regional to local level data and ensure public accessibility of evidence bases on incidences and impacts of armed violence, on women, girls, men and boys, public perceptions of safety, and to measure the effectiveness of interventions.
- We call on the international community and donor governments to harmonise interventions for aid assistance with other foreign policy, and not undermine development assistance with support to security sectors and irresponsible weapons transfers which perpetuate armed violence.
- We recognise the shared burden and responsibility of challenging armed violence and call on States to recognise civil society as a key partner in all decision making and interventions to support the development of communities affected. We call for more partnership between nations of this region to share knowledge and best practices on common challenges.

Finally, our resolve to fight the scourge of armed violence has been strengthened by this dynamic regional review conference here in Manila, the Philippines, where the inspiring spirit for peace has been generously shared by our Filipino hosts. With our collective voice and our shared vision, we commit to remain active and resilient in taking this agenda forward.