

8. Demand reduction in action: Examples since 2001

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Permanent Peace Movement is a Lebanese organization working on conflict resolution and arms control in my society, a society that has experienced years of armed violence. We consider conflict resolution and arms control as the two main pillars for peacebuilding. We often hear of a tradition of gun ownership in the Middle East region. My organization along with colleagues from across the Middle East decided to try to get a better understanding of this. To do so, we undertook a survey on public perceptions of human security in a number of Middle East countries. The results of this survey revealed some surprising links between the demand for weapons and development in the Middle East.. The findings of this survey are published in a new report by the Middle East North Africa Action Network on Small Arms (MENAANSA). There are three conclusions from this survey which I would particularly like to bring to your attention this morning:

- A clear majority of participants in the survey confirmed that they felt there was a direct link between the presence of arms in their communities and underdevelopment.
- Over 80% of young people surveyed across the Middle East want stricter state controls on private gun ownership
- In Gaza, Lebanon and Sudan, over 50% of respondents would not choose to own a gun, with the most common reason being given that guns are perceived as dangerous for the family. In the West Bank, while over 40% of people would choose to own a gun, 60% nonetheless believe there are too many guns in their society.

These results illustrate that, in the Middle East, among the factors shaping the demand for the possession of weapons, there is a strong link in the minds of people between the demand for weapons and issues of underdevelopment and governance and that they are interested in strategies to help make their communities safe from gun violence.

The PoA laid the foundation for clear development themes and actions such as: large scale public information and awareness programming, attention to the needs of children, the importance of public participation, the promotion of dialogue and creation of a culture of peace, and the successful implementation of small arms control in postwar societies.

In reviewing implementation of the PoA, it is important to benefit from the experience of an enormous range of programmes, in all parts of the world, which have reduced demand, improved development and increased feelings of security.

For example, in the Caribbean, leaders of armed youth gangs have been encouraged to participate in programmes to reduce armed violence.

In South Africa, civil society created "Gun-Free Zones", providing safe spaces where people are no longer threatened by guns. The "Gun Free Zones" have challenged the belief that gun carrying is a normal activity, and have led to increased perceptions of safety.

In Cambodia, law enforcement officers have been trained in the appropriate use of force, as well as in the provisions *of* the national firearms legislation and their implementation. There has been a massive public awareness campaign to promote the new firearms legislation, and evidence suggests it has been effective.)

In my own region of the Middle East--from Yemen to Sudan and from Jordan to Lebanon--there have also been a range *of* initiatives aimed at addressing demand factors,

We still have a lot of work to do. The Outcome Document must strengthen the commitments States made 5 years ago to combat the illicit trade from both a supply and demand perspective.

The latest draft Outcome Document contains several very important references to tackling the demand for small arms, including paragraphs 16 to 19 in Section III. In particular, paragraph 36 in section II makes an important reference to promoting a culture of peace.

We regret that a reference to global principles in the use of force by police has been removed from the draft and also that gender-specific recommendations have been removed.

In the last five years we have learned that community level engagement is essential to reducing overall levels *of* armed violence., increase perceptions of security, and increase human well-being-which really should be at the root of what our business here is about.

I thank you.