Statement on the Global week of Action Against Gun Violence
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By

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Every minute someone dies from a gun shot. And the indirect consequences of this grueling statistic extend much further when one considers injuries, forced migration, revenues lost, and opportunities missed. One thing is certain: armed violence is profoundly impeding the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Three-quarters of all guns in the world – that is more than half a billion weapons – are in the hands of civilians. The onus is on governments to adequately regulate and control this massive private ownership of weapons and bullets. Only sound legislation coupled with effective law enforcement can make everyone feel equally safe.

Controlling the illegal spread and curbing the misuse of guns have been important topics on the agenda of the United Nations. Since 2001, countries agreed to a Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, its International Tracing Instrument, and a Firearms Protocol under the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This year, an impressive step forward has been the adoption at the UN of the Arms Trade Treaty, which fully includes small arms and light weapons in its scope.

Setting international standards is vital. But the hardest work is done by those working in the line of fire: peacekeepers preventing a local conflict from flaring up, former gang members finding the courage to choose a new livelihood, citizens contributing to community policing, grass roots activists canvassing in challenging neighbourhoods.

The Global Week of Action against Gun Violence reminds us of all the further efforts that are needed to make this world a safer and more secure place to live in.

In less than two years, all countries of the United Nations will decide on the follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals. A lively discussion is under way. I am glad that the High-level Panel advising on the future goals has called for a “fundamental shift – to recognise peace and good governance as a core element of well-being.” These wise women and men highlighted that “effectively implementing small arms control is especially important.”

Indeed our joint endeavour to eradicate poverty throughout the globe will need to include a concrete, measurable goal on diminishing armed violence. It would finally fully bridge the realms of disarmament and development – areas which have been separated for far too long.

The Global Week of Action against Gun Violence will contribute to this important cause – so that people living in deprivation and fear can see a brighter, safer future ahead.