Policy Statement

Security System Reform and Governance: Policy and Good Practice

Security is fundamental to people's livelihoods, reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It relates to personal and state safety, access to social services and political processes. It is a core government responsibility, necessary for economic and social development and vital for the protection of human rights.

Security matters to the poor and other vulnerable groups, especially women and children, because bad policing, weak justice and penal systems and corrupt militaries mean that they suffer disproportionately from crime, insecurity and fear. They are consequently less likely to be able to access government services, invest in improving their own futures and escape from poverty.

Security is important for improved governance. Inappropriate security structures and mechanisms can contribute to weak governance and to instability and violent conflict, which impact negatively on poverty reduction. As the UN Secretary General notes in his September 2003 report on the Millennium Declaration, "We must make even greater efforts to prevent the outbreak of violence well before tensions and conflicts have eroded polities and economies to the point of collapse".

OECD governments and their development actors aim to help partner countries establish appropriate structures and mechanisms to manage change and resolve disputes through democratic and peaceful means. Support for security system reform (SSR) forms part of this assistance. It seeks to increase the ability of partner countries to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance and the rule of law. Given restrictions on Official Development Assistance (ODA), interested OECD governments may need to draw on non-ODA sources to assist activities in this area.

SSR is a key component of the broader "human security" agenda, developed with leadership from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and described in *Human Security Now,* the report of the UN Commission on Human Security. The human security agenda includes, for example, issues of livelihoods and social organisation of the poor that go beyond those covered here. SSR itself also extends well beyond the narrower focus of more traditional security assistance on defence, intelligence and policing. The security system includes the armed forces, the police and gendarmerie, intelligence services and similar bodies, judicial and penal institutions, as well as the elected and duly appointed civil authorities responsible for control and oversight (*e.g.* Parliament, the Executive, and the Defence Ministry).

With this policy statement and paper, DAC donors intend to help their own governments/ organisations, developing countries and international organisations to reinforce work on SSR. This requires strategic planning for improved policies, practices and partnerships amongst all actors. The DAC also reaffirms its commitment to work on the security and development nexus agreed in the DAC Guidelines and policy statement: *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict.*