In September 2015 world leaders will meet at the UN to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the future global development framework that will replace the current Millennium Development Goals. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has elaborated on seventeen proposed goals and associated targets that are planned to run until 2030. Amongst them, Goal 16 focuses on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and accountable institutions.

As we are about to define the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we must bear in mind that peace and societies in which people can live free from the fear of violence, are among the most important conditions in making poverty reduction and sustainable development a reality. The post-2015 framework should include separate goals related to peace and security and a clear, concise and measurable target on violence. Currently more than a billion people in the world are estimated to live in conditions of societal instability. Violence can, however, also be a problem in developed countries. The post-2015 agenda must also be conflict sensitive. It must address the structural causes of conflict and violence. Among such causes are violations of human rights, human inequality, poverty, conflicts over and scarcity of resources, lack of basic services and livelihoods, unemployment, corruption, environmental crimes, etc. These factors behind conflict and instability are varied and often interconnected. They lie not only within states, but may be of regional or global nature.

We must also emphasize prevention of conflicts and violence. To this end, as pointed out by the Secretary-General, we must strengthen democracy, build stronger, more resilient, accountable State institutions, ensure adequate checks and balances, promote the rule of law and work to establish effective democratic control over the armed forces. It also means, as expressed in Security Council Resolution 2117 of 2013 on small arms and light weapons, that the enforcement of arms embargoes should include avoiding the diversion of State-owned or controlled weapons; enhancing stockpile security and management; and implementing national weapons-marking programmes, in line with the International Tracing Instrument. This is essential in order to prevent relapse back to conflict.

As proposed by Goal 16.4, we must address the proliferation of conflict armaments and the illicit arms trade as part of the post-2015 agenda. For post-conflict peacebuilding, the

1 The 30-member Open Working Group was established in January 2013 by the UN General Assembly with the task of preparing a proposal on the SDGs (UNGA, 2013). However, in order to improve inclusiveness, several countries shared seats in the Open Working Group.

2 Open Working Group on Sustainable Development proposal to significantly reduce the illicit arms flows. See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal
destruction of surplus weapons and ammunition removes possible fuel for new instability. UNIDIR is contributing to work towards limiting and controlling the weapons that tear the fabric of societies, such as small arms, cluster munitions, landmines and explosive remnants of war. We focus on generating ideas and practical initiatives to address the security challenges related to the illicit flow, uncontrolled accumulation and misuse of various types of weapons and ammunition that threaten public safety, pose risks to society and impede efforts to achieve sustainable development.

UNIDIR’s work in this area include convening expert meetings to frame discussions on harmonization of end user and end use control systems; providing assistance to Member States and UN field missions in order to build capacity to effectively manage arms and ammunition for States in conflict/post-conflict settings, including under arms embargoes; and developing practical implementation support tools to enhance the use of existing international guidance documents for field practitioners, such as the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG).

An essential goal in any effective development agenda is the protection of women from armed violence. Landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Let me conclude by reminding that Article 26 of the UN Charter aims to “promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”. It clearly links reduction of military expenditures with development and peace and security.