

## WHAT ROLE FOR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN PEACE PROCESSES?

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### INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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### OVERVIEW

Security sector reform (SSR) seeks to improve state and human security by ensuring that the provision, management and oversight of security are anchored in a framework of democratic governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights. SSR and related security programmes—such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), small arms and light weapons (SALW) control, and mine action—are about the control of violence in society. This makes them central to every peace process. Negotiations and the agreements that follow set the agenda for post-conflict security reform. What little guidance exists on SSR and peace processes emphasizes the importance of including security-related considerations early on in the negotiations, and it tends to assume that comprehensive peace agreements with extensive and detailed provisions are a precondition for quality outcomes. However, the constraints within which mediators operate and the current conflict landscape hamper decisions about SSR and related security agendas. Moreover, peace agreements that address these issues in depth do not necessarily lead to successful policies.

### FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the results of a research project by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)—which was finalized in the first quarter of 2019 and seeks to bridge the gap between the mediation and SSR communities—this session aimed to explore how provisions on SSR and related activities emerge from peace processes, and the role of SSR and related activities in war-to-peace transitions.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Security sector reform can support a peace process in a number of ways. This support can be through brokering and building trust between conflict actors. This is especially the case between state and non-state actors. SSR can address conflict drivers which might be the root causes of the conflict. Finally, it can create the necessary conditions for moving a peace process forward.

There is often a lack of understanding about peace mediation among SSR practitioners and a lack of understanding about SSR among mediators. While mediators are commonly concerned with short-term violence reduction and consensus and initiative for change coming from the conflict parties themselves, SSR practitioners focus on promoting the principles of democratic governance of the security sector, as adapted to the local context..

The perspective from the international community is that states have a monopoly of violence in conflict area. Hence, the state security sector often sees itself as leader in SSR matters, therefore excluding non-state actors from negotiations and SSR processes. In reality, many non-state actors are providing state-like services, including security, which has to more effectively be dealt with in SSR and peace mediation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Share knowledge between mediators and SSR practitioners and make assumptions about the goal of the process explicit.
- During the implementation phase of a peace agreement, clarify the roles of parliament and civil society in the security sector, in particular with regard to their oversight function.
- Sequencing and the level of specificity or detail of SSR negotiations are context-specific, but there is often a need for 'strategic ambiguity' in order to prevent talks from collapsing and to give stakeholders more room for adaption during SSR implementation.
- For viable SSR, include all the stakeholders of the peace process
- Connect peace processes and SSR to local perspectives and needs.