



Geneva Call, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the International Peace Institute, with the support of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, cordially invite you to a panel discussion on:

Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups: Enhancing the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Nearly every armed conflict in the world today involves one or more non-State armed groups. They encompass a diverse range of identities and motivations as well as varying degrees of capacities and willingness to observe international humanitarian law and human rights standards.

In order to improve the treatment of civilian populations and reduce human suffering resulting from armed conflict, it is essential to influence the conduct and practices of non-State armed groups. In his May 2009 report on the protection of civilians, the Secretary-General emphasized that international actors need urgently to develop a comprehensive approach towards improving these groups' compliance with the law, including consistent and sustained dialogue with *all* parties to conflict.

There is a considerable body of experience on humanitarian engagement with non-State armed groups among UN and NGO humanitarian actors. This includes initiatives to organize immunization campaigns, ensure that the protected status of medical facilities is respected, eliminate the use of anti-personnel landmines and facilitate their clearance, cease unlawful recruitment and use of children in hostilities and facilitate their demobilization, and other measures to safeguard and enhance the well-being of civilian populations during armed conflict.

This event will bring together Member State representatives, UN Secretariat officials, NGO leaders, and members of the broader policy community for an interactive dialogue focusing on best practices, lessons learned, and strategies for engaging non-State armed groups to increase their compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights standards. In particular, it will provide an opportunity to hear from experienced practitioners about diverse examples of approaches and activities undertaken to influence the conduct and practices of non-State armed groups as well as about the challenges faced in this regard. The discussion will also explore what Member States can do to support humanitarian engagement efforts and thereby improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Tuesday, July 20, 2010 at Trygve Lie Center for Peace, Security and Development New York

Agenda:

9:00 a.m.

Welcome

Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, International Peace Institute (IPI)*

9:10 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Introductory Remarks

H.E. Mr. Paul Seger, *Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations*

Sir John Holmes, *Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator*

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. **Panel I: Rationale and Strategies for Engaging Non-State Armed Groups**

Why is engagement with non-State armed groups important and how can it best be effected? When and how should such groups be engaged? What are the incentives for non-State armed groups to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law? How can external actors better coordinate their efforts in the field and share best practices in engaging with such groups in order to better protect civilians in armed conflict? How can Member States encourage the adoption of strategies to support non-State actor compliance with norms affecting the protection of civilians?

Chair: Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, IPI*

Speakers: Ms. Elisabeth Decrey Warner, *President and Co-founder, Geneva Call*

Mr. Louis-Georges Arsenault, *Director of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF*

Mr. Mark Bowden, *UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Somalia*

11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Coffee Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. **Panel II: Case Studies, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices**

What lessons can be learned from previous experience in engaging non-State armed groups? What were the major issues involved in each case? What strategies for addressing these issues were most effective and why? What are the main challenges associated with humanitarian engagement with non-State armed groups and how have these been managed? What specific lessons and best practices can be learned from each case? How can they be applied in future situations?

Chair: Mr. Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, *Chief of Policy, Development & Studies Branch, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*

Speakers: Mr. Sayed Aqa, *UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Bahrain (formerly Coordinator of the Afghan Campaign to Ban Landmines)*

Reverend Francisco de Roux, *Director of the Programme for Development and Peace in Magdalena Medio, Colombia*

Mr. Jonathan Somer, *Legal Advisor and Programme Coordinator on Children and Non-State Actors, Geneva Call*

12:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, *Chief of Policy, Development & Studies Branch, UN OCHA*

Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, IPI*