

# Briefing Notes for Working Sessions

**DFID** Department for  
International  
Development

London 15 - 17 February 2000



Security Sector Reform & Military Expenditure Symposium

# OBJECTIVES

Days one and two of the symposium will consist of three plenary sessions and four working sessions. For the purposes of achieving more focused discussion, participants will be divided into four groups during each of the working sessions. Over the course of the two days, the groups will address the session topics from four different perspectives: developing country, military, development agency, and international financial institution.

The main objective of the working sessions is to flesh out the issues raised in the discussion paper 1: 'Security Sector Reform and the Management of Defence Expenditure'. The central challenge posed is to move away from a focus on *levels* of defence spending and give greater attention to changing the process by which spending decisions are made. The workshop sessions offer an opportunity for a range of different views on these issues to be expressed and for areas of common ground amongst the relevant actors to be identified.

Each of the working sessions will be facilitated by a chair-person. The workshop session briefing notes that follow are only intended as a starting point to stimulate the discussion. Indeed, it is hoped that the conference participants will come armed with other questions and a willingness to engage with the full range of complex and politically-sensitive issues surrounding security sector reform and defence expenditure management.

To ensure a lively and critical debate and to encourage participants to share examples of the practical dilemmas involved in addressing security sector problems, all of the working sessions will take place under Chatham House rules i.e. subsequent reporting of comments will not be attributed to particular speakers. A rapporteur will be on hand in each of the working sessions to record the key points of debate. These points will be used to compile the conference proceedings and will also serve as a basis for revising and developing further the framework paper.

# WORKING SESSION 1

Tuesday 15 February 2000

## **Comprehensive security analysis: roles, responsibilities and missions of the security forces.**

Session objective: *to gain a clearer understanding of the complex environment in which security forces operate in the developing world and the associated challenges of transforming them to fulfil their roles more effectively.*

Countries attempting to improve the management of their defence expenditure will, in many cases, need to initiate reforms in the way their security sectors are organised, equipped and operate. The process of redefining the role of the military has implications for the role of the internal forces of law and order. The reform process must be based on an accurate assessment of both the internal and external threats countries face. Attention must also be paid to the nature of relations between the security forces and civil authorities. A clearer understanding of the changing role and competence of the state in providing public services is necessary to anticipate the challenges of helping security forces to fulfil their legitimate roles more effectively.

- What are the main security challenges facing developing countries today? Are there some commonalities? To what degree must these security challenges be understood in a local context? In an international context? How have economic and political crises affected the functioning of security forces?
- What are the implications of the growth of intra-state conflict and violent crime for the organisation of state security forces? Does the distinction between the 'internal' and 'external' security functions of the state effectively apply in all countries? What are the reasons behind the prominence of the defence forces in the internal affairs of many countries?
- Security sector reforms are largely shaped by domestic social and political change. How can the challenge of security-sector reform be most constructively addressed in the context of political instability or difficult economic transitions? Could more be done to outline a roadmap for reform in the context of peace processes and agreements?
- What are the links between the restructuring of the security sector and efforts to improve the management of defence expenditure? In countries where the military enjoys great autonomy, how can it be engaged more actively in support of reform processes? What are the dangers of attempting to address defence expenditure problems without the full support of security forces?

# WORKING SESSION 2

Tuesday 15 February 2000

## **Balancing spending in the security and non-security sectors: what are the main challenges and priorities?**

Session objective: *to increase understanding of the difficult trade-offs that states face in the pursuit of security and development, and how competing objectives can more effectively be reconciled.*

While some allocation of resources to the security sector is clearly necessary and desirable to maintain peace and stability, a balance must be struck between achieving this objective and avoiding a build-up of the security sector that threatens development goals or erodes security. In poorer states, the pursuit of security and development involves very difficult trade-offs that will have both short and long-term implications for the stability of societies. Optimising the allocation of scarce public resources among different sectors requires a combination of effective institutional capacity to assess needs and as inclusive a decision-making process as possible in order to ensure that the broader public interests are addressed.

- Which actors should be involved in making decisions concerning the allocation of public expenditure between security and non-security sectors? What are the appropriate forms of public

participation in security policy-making? In what circumstances – for instance, when states are faced with strong security threats – should the role of these actors in the decision-making process change?

- Where state institutional capacity is weak, donors and the international financial institutions have an immense responsibility to ensure that their interventions are in line with local needs and priorities. What should donor priorities be? Should they adopt a common approach?
- When the priorities of donors and countries undertaking reforms conflict, how should they be reconciled? What are the limits of a narrow focus on levels of defence expenditure at the expense of efforts to understand and change the process by which security decision-making occurs?
- In what, if any, circumstances can states justify a softening in fiscal discipline? How should the IFIs react to this? What are the dangers of an over-zealous focus on achieving macro-economic stability at the expense of efforts to protect social spending or strengthen mechanisms for financial management?

# WORKING SESSION 3

Wednesday 16 February 2000

## **The challenge of bringing defence expenditure into line with national priorities: obstacles and approaches.**

Session objective: *to identify the institutional components of effective management of defence expenditure and how an enabling environment conducive to carrying out and sustaining reforms can be achieved.*

Once states have made assessments of their security needs and determined spending priorities, the challenge is to ensure that public resources are effectively and efficiently allocated and used in pursuit of national goals. In countries with a tradition of high defence expenditure, it will often be difficult to translate the new expenditure priorities outlined in state budgets into *actual* changes in spending patterns. Moreover, where defence expenditures are reduced, this will not automatically result in an increase in spending in the social and economic sectors. In the absence of an enabling political environment conducive to transparency and robust budgetary procedures, the task of managing defence expenditure effectively is made more difficult.

- The key principle presented in the discussion paper 1 is that defence spending should be subject to the same principles as spending in other areas of the public sector. Is there consensus around this principle?

- The criteria of transparency and accountability underpin much of the debate on the management of defence expenditure. What kinds of security issues are legitimately confidential and should not be open to public scrutiny or debate? What are the obstacles to achieving greater transparency?
- Helping countries to manage defence expenditures effectively suggests the need for an appropriate mix of enforcement and incentive-based approaches in donor programmes. What role should donor conditionality play? What kinds of incentives will allow all stakeholders in security sector reform processes to work more effectively?
- Changes in military spending that are brought about abruptly may also be institutionally traumatic for the security forces and counter-productive for national security. What are the dangers of applying too much pressure on states to increase transparency on security decision-making?
- How does the international context condition the success of security reforms? How can arms sales, on the one hand, and promoting security reforms, on the other, be made consistent with each other?

# WORKING SESSION 4

Wednesday 16 February 2000

## **Partnerships and next steps: the challenge of mainstreaming security-sector governance into development policy.**

Session objective: *to identify some practical next steps to integrate a security-sector reform perspective into overall government policies and foreign assistance strategies, and improve donor coordination.*

Although the long-term benefits for development of improved security-sector governance are now widely recognised, there is less consensus what priority should be placed on security sector reforms. Efforts to promote more effective management of defence expenditure are only one of various competing priorities for both developing countries and donors. Furthermore, consensus is lacking on what kinds of reforms are needed, the pace and sequencing of reforms, and how progress should be evaluated. These differences notwithstanding, recognition is growing concerning the need for closer cooperation amongst donors and between donors and countries undertaking reforms on these issues.

- Security sector reforms require effective local ownership of the process. In situations where external actors play a major role in initiating a reform process, how can key local reform-minded actors be identified and sustained?
- Security sector reforms require a comprehensive approach. What are the risks of focusing on one aspect of the problem at the expense of another – for example, pressing governments to reduce the level of expenditures at the expense of efforts to strengthen systems for financial management?
- Is there a risk of focusing too much on helping countries manage defence expenditure without providing sufficient support for military reform? What are the implications for the sequencing and pace of security sector reforms? How long a time horizon is needed for donor support to be effective?
- What is an appropriate ‘division of labour’ within the development community on security sector issues? How can actors with an interest in issues as diverse as development finance, military restructuring, and poverty reduction pursue institutional agendas without undermining common objectives?
- How do the mandates and internal restrictions of development agencies and the international financial institutions constrain their ability to work in the security sector? To work with military actors? Is it mandates that pose obstacles, or is it simply a question of how mandates are interpreted?

## DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the British government department responsible for promoting development and the reduction of poverty. The government elected in May 1997 increased its commitment to development by strengthening the department and increasing its budget.

The policy of the government was set out in the White Paper on International Development, published in November 1997. The central focus of the policy is a commitment to the internationally agreed target to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, together with the associated targets including basic health care provision and universal access to primary education by the same date.

DFID seeks to work in partnership with governments which are committed to the international targets, and also seeks to work with business, civil society and the research community to encourage progress which will help reduce poverty. We also work with multilateral institutions including the World Bank, UN agencies and the European Commission. The bulk of our assistance is concentrated on the poorest countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

We are also contributing to poverty elimination in middle income countries, and helping the transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe to enable the widest number of people to benefit from the process of change.

As well as its headquarters in London and East Kilbride, DFID has offices in New Delhi, Bangkok, Nairobi, Harare, Pretoria, Dhaka, Suva, Kathmandu and Bridgetown. In other parts of the world, DFID works through staff based in British Embassies and High Commissions.

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