

introduction

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals The Role played by Conversion

In contrast to the turbulent year of 2003, marked by the war in Iraq and the ensuing crisis at the United Nations, 2004 passed without an interstate war of similar significance. In fact, there was even some good news: overall, the total number of wars and armed conflicts continued to decline, while a good many conflicts, including some long-lingering wars, were brought closer to peace. The United Nations recovered remarkably quick from its deep-seated crisis, with the UN reform measures outlined in the report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes¹, published in November 2004, receiving widespread support. But perhaps a more telling testimony to the UN's recovery was the central position it adopted in mitigating the consequences of the Tsunami disaster around the Indian Ocean at the end of the year.

Regrettably, where BICC's areas of expertise are concerned, there is also bad news to report about 2004. The UN's response during the Tsunami disaster stands in sharp contrast to the ongoing mass killings in Darfur (Sudan). According to various estimates, 70,000 to 300,000 may have died there. The Sudanese Government, using *Janjaweed* militias, is systematically killing and expelling

civilians from Darfur.² The International Community, including the African Union and the United Nations, have not been able to effectively protect civilians or to press the Sudanese government to do so sufficiently.

Moreover certain worrying trends continued, only some of which can be listed here. One of the most alarming is the increase in military expenditures, particularly in countries with the largest military forces. A further trend is the decreasing capability of governments in certain regions to provide security, welfare, and law and order for their citizens. Although, nominally, the number of wars and armed conflicts is continuing to fall, physical threats to the lives of ordinary people seem to be increasing in many parts of the world. A third trend of concern is undoubtedly AIDS—and this is exacerbated by trend number four: the accumulating shortfall in development assistance. In comparison to levels promised both in the early 2000s and on other occasions, such as at the Monterrey Summit of 2002, the current levels leave much to be desired. If poverty—the root cause of crisis and conflicts—is to be substantially reduced, the promised funds are desperately needed. These four trends can be summarized by saying that the security and livelihoods of billions of people

¹ High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. 2004. *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*. New York, November.

² International Crisis Group, 2005. *Darfur: The Failure to Protect*. Africa Report No. 89. Brussels; www.darfurgenocide.org.

remain highly precarious: more than one billion human beings live on less than US \$1 per day; more than two billion on less than US \$2 per day. In many parts of the world, human security is still highly endangered.

Moreover, if these trends are worrying in themselves, combined they undermine the attainment of what is arguably the most important policy objective of the first part of the 21st century: the core of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed by Heads of State in 2000, namely the eradication of poverty. Discouragingly, it appears that the tasks the UN has set itself in formulating the MDGs cannot be accomplished without major policy changes and reordering of priorities.

One reason for this possible failure is that development and security are often acted upon in isolation of each other, with the MDGs relegated to the development sphere, thus seemingly little related to security issues, while security issues themselves remain the prerogative of high politics. Quite on the contrary, however, these are not two distinct issues but ones which overlap closely. Although this fact is often recognized in principle, it is even more often ignored during policy implementation. Hardly anyone objects to a sentence such as ‘No development without security and no security without development’, but governments seem to have a hard time acting accordingly. A striking example are the priorities set by powerful countries where spending increases in recent years are concerned, one of the many issues discussed below.

Resource allocation in rich countries is one link between security and development. Conversion—in a broad understanding of the term as adopted by BICC—is another. The effective and efficient transformation of military-related processes, activities, assets and structures can support conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, and economic development. In particular, it will be argued below that conversion can make a substantial contribution to attaining the MDGs. The potential that can be made available through the process of

conversion is often both underestimated and underexploited by political decision-makers. In fact, it seems fairly unlikely that the MDGs can be met unless issues of security and conflict are brought into the diagnosis of the obstacles the Goals face, and conversion is used as an instrument to overcome these. Luckily, some recent signs point to a growing recognition of the links between security and development, for instance in recent major UN reports and in the preparations for the summit to review the MDGs in 2005.

This introduction begins by briefly discussing the links between conversion and the attainment of the MDGs. It then describes some of the main points made in this *conversion survey*, focusing primarily on the relationship between security and development.

The Millennium Development Goals and human security

None of the 8 Millennium Development Goals, or the indicators attached to them, addresses conflict, security or peace directly. Their objectives are (1) to reduce absolute poverty, (2) to achieve universal primary education, (3) to promote gender equality and empower women, (4) to reduce child mortality, (5) to improve maternal health, (6) to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, (7) to ensure environmental sustainability and (8) to develop a global partnership for development.³ All these are important and worthy goals. And one can well argue that there are sufficient other statements, programs and processes that address peace and security, starting with the United Nations Charter itself, in which, after all, the world organization is committed to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize the close link between hard issues of security/conflict and the MDGs. The major reason for this is that the attainment of

³ www.developmentgoals.org.

the MDGs will certainly be influenced by, if not actually depend on, progress in strengthening security, particularly through conflict prevention and conflict resolution. There are several facets to this link, two of which are discussed in more depth below. Another reason for acknowledging the connection is that measures taken to achieve the MDGs actually have the potential to reduce security. Like all interventions, MDG policies must be conflict-sensitive.

Linking security and development to the way one thinks about achieving the MDGs and to consequent action is no new or revolutionary idea. Indeed, the Millennium Declaration, adopted at the Meeting of Heads of States in September 2000 and from which the MDGs emanated, contains chapters on a variety of subjects: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; protecting our common environment; human rights; democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; and, meeting the special needs of Africa. The statement “We will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, which has claimed more than 5 million lives in the past decade” stands besides the statement “We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.”⁴ What is lacking, however, is a concrete program, similar to the ones developed within the MDG process, aimed specifically at enhancing conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding, and conversion in support of the MDGs.

Not only is it important to acknowledge the potential contribution that security can make to achieving the MDGs, the MDGs themselves also represent important steps forward in the struggle for peace and security. Empirical research has demonstrated

the close correlation between levels of economic development and the incidence of internal war. The likelihood of a war is more than twice as high for countries below the threshold of an annual *per capita* income of US \$500–1,000 than for countries above that threshold. Moreover, the argument that achieving the MDGs is vital for international and national security and peace is emphasized in both major UN documents cited above. The High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes particularly stressed the security threats emanating from state failure. What is more, the final report of the UN Millennium Project, under the directorship of Jeffrey Sachs, argues as follows: “Achieving the Millennium Development Goals should ... be placed centrally in international efforts to end violent conflict, instability and terrorism.”⁵

Where do we stand in respect to the MDGs?

Not all reports on the MDGs are essentially adverse: in a Progress Report published by the United Nations in late 2004, 20 indicators were evaluated for 10 subregions in the developing world, using a simple traffic-light system of red for ‘no change or negative change since 1990’, yellow for ‘progress at a range insufficient to meet the target’, and green for ‘predicted achievement, or near achievement of targets by 2015’.⁶ The result was that the three colors were distributed equally throughout the 200 boxes of the matrix. Among the goals which are least likely to be met are the reduction of child mortality and the increase in primary education enrolment. Likewise, little has been done to address gender aspects of the Millennium Development Goals.

Clearly worst in practically all dimensions are the prospects of reaching the Millennium Development Goals in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has no green box, but rather 14 red ones. In other words, it is not

⁵ UN Millennium Project. 2005. *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. New York, p. 10.

⁶ www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdg2004chart.pdf.

⁴ UN Resolution A/RES/55/2, 18 September 2000.

on track to reach any indicators listed in the 2004 Progress Report of the United Nations.

While the lack of progress in Africa is pervasive of the list of MDGs, it is especially disheartening with regard to reducing extreme poverty and hunger. The United Nations has not been able to register any change since 2000, so that there is little chance that the target of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 will be reached, unless there is a major turnaround in policy.

Most experts and organizations—such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the OECD—agree that the MDGs can still be achieved. In fact, this is the core message of the Millennium Project Report. However, they also agree that there needs to be a major increase in scale and ambition, both in terms of resources as well as priorities, effectiveness and the targeting of measures. For some of the crucial regions, the first five years after the adoption of the MDGs have been largely wasted. The time for achieving the MDGs globally and in all regions is running out. The Millennium Development Project Report urges: “The Millennium Development Goals are too important to fail. It is time to put them on the fast track they require and deserve. The year 2005 should inaugurate a decade of bold action.”⁷ With this message in mind, the next question is how conversion can contribute to realizing these goals.

Countries in crisis and conflict

One of the major obstacles in the path of the MDGs is the difficulty in improving the lot of people in countries where crisis and conflict are rife. Conflict is a great destroyer of resources, values, and futures. The effectiveness of development assistance decreases with the level of conflict. Similarly, weak and unstable state structures lower the effectiveness of development assistance. In recognition of these truths, development donors have in the past increasingly restricted the focus of their assistance to concentrate

on the ‘good performers’, namely those countries where development assistance is the most effective. While such a focus may make sense from a practical point of view, it is unlikely to contribute to reaching the MDGs: about one-quarter of all countries in the developing world have experienced war or armed conflict during the last ten years while a good number of countries in conflict are among the main ‘problem cases’ where attaining the MDGs is concerned.

Taking stock of this, development donors have again begun to change their attitude by increasing efforts to address problems in so-called ‘poor-performing’ countries, for instance within the framework of the LICUS (low income countries under stress) initiative. But more and, above all, innovative approaches need to be applied if the actual causes of conflict are to be addressed and conflict resolution achieved. Doubtless, support for governmental and social capacity-building is absolutely vital. Moreover, in at least some cases, this should build more on traditional structures, procedures and agents than has been the practice up to now.

One promising suggestion in this vein was put forward by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in its report of late 2004. The Panel proposed establishing a Peacebuilding Commission, whose tasks are to include the identification of countries in crisis; the organization, in partnership with the national government, of proactive assistance in prevention of further decline; assistance in planning for transition between conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding; and, in particular, the marshalling and sustaining of the efforts of the international community in post-conflict peacebuilding over whatever period might prove necessary. The Peacebuilding Commission is to be aided in its work by a Peacebuilding Support Office whose task would also cover the coordination of peacebuilding work among the various UN offices and organizations involved.

This proposal, while modest in terms of the formal authority to make decisions

⁷ See Note 5, p. 2.

on matters including the resources needed, challenges established patterns of international behavior and can be considered bold within the framework of international politics. If adopted with the mandate proposed by the High-level Panel, it could lead to a more balanced approach to state decay and militant conflict throughout the world—one less shaped by the international prowess of the governments concerned and the games played by the world's major powers. It could similarly help to coordinate and streamline the activities of the various actors involved in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Unfortunately, though, because of its potential for interfering in what governments often perceive as their internal affairs as well as of reducing the influence of the major powers, it stands little chance of being implemented unless both a coalition of governments along with civil societies strongly support it.

The High-level Panel also addressed other important topics such as the monopoly of the United Nations in legitimizing the use of military force and the definition of terrorism, but unfortunately only refers to the MDGs in passing. Yet the Panel did stress the argument that poverty is a fertile breeding-ground for other threats to mankind, including civil conflict: “A more secure world is only possible if poor countries are given a real chance to develop.”⁸

The flip side of the relationship between conflict and development is also a well-known fact however, and one which the report of the UN Millennium Project likewise recognizes: poor countries have more difficulty in getting out of the ‘conflict trap’ and are more likely to show state decay, which in turn are both prime causes of poverty. Conflict prevention and successful post-conflict reconstruction are important prerequisites for reaching the MDGs.

Successful conversion—the transformation of military processes, activities and resources to civilian use—can make a significant contribution to conflict prevention

and post-conflict stabilization in several ways. One is the successful reintegration of former combatants who might otherwise become a source of, or at least factor for, renewed conflict. Another is the control of small arms and light weapons, a measure which is frequently linked to a further aspect of conversion: the reform and democratization of all security forces and their oversight bodies. Last but not least, the conversion of facilities together with the reallocation of available resources towards development objectives, rather than war and the military, can cement the changes for the better.

Funding the MDGs: The ‘guns and butter’ argument

The attainment of the MDGs is not only a matter of additional resources. Rather, the crucial issue is the *more effective* use of available resources. Nonetheless, observers agree that the MDGs cannot be reached without additional funds, including those from development donors. The World Bank has stated that additional development assistance of about US \$50 billion per year is required to achieve the MDGs.⁹ The report of the UN Millennium Project argues for an increase in development aid as a share of donor countries’ national income from 0.25 percent in 2003 to 0.44 percent in 2006 and 0.54 percent in 2015 in support of the MDGs. Furthermore, the High-level Panel reiterated the earlier commitment by donor countries to a share of 0.7 percent of development aid in national income. Whatever the exact numbers, the effort required is immense and priorities need to change fast.

So far, additional development assistance has fallen well short of these requirements. In 2003, official development assistance (ODA) brushed US \$69 billion, up US \$10 billion in real terms from the level of

⁸ See Note 1, p. VIII.

⁹ World Bank. 2004. *Global Monitoring Report 2004: Policies and Actions for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Related Outcomes*. June, p. 167.

1999.¹⁰ The shortfall in promised resources is even more striking if measured against commitments made in terms of ODA shares of national income. In 2003, only five countries—Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden—had shares over 0.7 percent. The share of 0.25 percent for all donors in the OECD was only 0.03 percentage points higher in 2003 than it had been in 2000. This equates to an increase of only 0.01 percentage points per year, much less than is required according to the projections mentioned. By way of contrast, if donor countries had spent the promised share of 0.7 percent of their national income, ODA in 2003 would have been a goodly US \$193 billion instead of US \$69 billion. Conspicuously, in comparison to other donors, the United States' ODA share as a percentage of national income was the lowest, namely 0.15; *bad* it spent the 0.7 percent of its national income advocated, ODA from the United States would have amounted to US \$76 billion, instead of the US \$16 billion, actually disbursed.¹¹

Having said this, a number of donors have restated their intention of meeting the '0.7 percent of national income' target in the future. Four have even given a firm date for reaching this target: Ireland by 2007; Belgium and Finland by 2010; and France of reaching 0.5 percent by 2007 and 0.7 percent by 2012. Spain has indicated it may manage 0.7 percent by 2012, and the United Kingdom that it may match this target by 2013. Other countries have fallen short of naming dates, and have only announced less ambitious near-term goals. The German government, for instance, has promised to raise its development assistance to 0.33 percent of national income in 2006. If—and this is quite a big 'if' considering the situation of several EU countries currently experiencing fiscal crisis and the United States with its high government

deficit of US \$375 billion in FY 2003—all the promises made in the past are indeed followed through, including those of the 2002 Monterrey Summit, the resources deemed necessary to reach the MDGs would become available.

At the same time, while increases in development assistance have lagged behind requirements and promises, increases in military expenditures have been extensive, as described below. With ODA rising by only about US \$10 billion between 1999 and 2003, military expenditures increased by virtually US \$28 billion in real terms. In terms of share of national income, military expenditures now stand at 2.6 percent globally, up 0.2 percentage points from 2000. Much of this increase, though not all, stems from development donor countries.

This indicates that there has been no conversion of financial resources on a global scale over the last few years. Instead, we have witnessed an increase in military expenditures—and admittedly also, though to a much lesser degree, development assistance. Nonetheless, it is obvious that, given the tight budget situations in many countries, it would be easier to live up to commitments to increase ODA with lower military expenditures. There is no automatic link between military expenditures and development assistance: the link has to be made through a conscious political decision. This became obvious in the early 1990s when lower military expenditures did not translate automatically into larger development assistance. The peace dividend—wherever it occurred—was not spent on reducing poverty but rather on easing government debts. In other words, it primarily made some already well-off people even richer. But there is also no arguing against the fact that money can only be spent once and that, therefore, there is an inherent choice between spending money on military efforts or on development.

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2004. *Statistical Annex of the 2004 Development Co-operation Report*. Paris, Tables 4 and 8.

¹¹ See Note 10. Calculated on the basis of Table 1.

The MDGs as a source of conflict

There is an additional reason for stressing the importance of successful conversion for attaining the MDGs, namely the potential of the MDGs—or rather the measures taken to reach them—to increase conflict. Financial flows to developing countries, be they in the form of aid or private investment, can actually aggravate internal tensions, for instance by favoring one group over the other. They can also become a source of additional income to individuals in the top echelons of government through corruption, thereby weakening the legitimacy and effectiveness of governments. While aid and private investment do not necessarily have such consequences, it cannot be denied that they have produced such effects in some instances in the past. At the very least, specific cases of empirical research have shown that high levels of aid can increase the likelihood of conflict.¹² It is therefore vital that aid is not provided without a good understanding of what effect it might have on open or smoldering conflict configurations. Another element that can reduce the likelihood of aid having negative effects is transparency, the most important antidote to corruption.

Summary

Countries in conflict—those either gradually emerging from a conflict or those still wallowing in the depths of governmental crisis—constitute a major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While this is now increasingly acknowledged, most prominently perhaps in the two major UN reports referred to above, there is still much resistance to addressing the connections between security and development systematically. 2005 has been declared a crucial year if the option of meeting the MDGs globally

and for all regions by 2015 is to be kept open. A recognition of the dangers of ignoring issues of peace and security, coupled with the awareness of the potential inherent in conversion to contribute to attaining them, must form part of any serious assessment of the MDGs.

BICC's findings

The following sections summarize the content of this *conversion survey* with a special emphasis on the links between security and development.

Arms and resources

Largely because of increases in spending by the major military powers, global military expenditures are continuing to rise. Expenditures reached a level of circa US \$950 billion in current prices in 2003, the latest year for which reliable data was available at the time of writing, or US \$844 billion in prices of 1999. In absolute terms, therefore, military spending has again reached the level of 1992; in relation to global income, however, it has only risen slightly over the last few years.

The United States has a large and growing share of about 40 percent of the global total. The 'War on Terror'—but even more so the cost of the war in Iraq—continued to drain government funding. About two-thirds of the rise in global military expenditures between 2002 and 2003 were due to increases in the United States; much of the rest came from another five countries: Iran, Russia, China, Kuwait and India. On the other hand, almost half of all states reduced military spending in 2003.

While global military spending continues to rise, other indicators from the military sector for 2003 attest to decreases. The number of major weapons in the arsenals of the world's armed forces was reduced by 1.6 percent to about 405,000, the number of personnel in the armed forces worldwide fell by 3.2 percent to 19.9 million, and employment in arms production shrank by 2.6 percent to 7.5 million. Again,

¹² McArtan Humphreys and Ashutosh Varshney. 2004. "Violent Conflict and the Millennium Development Goals: Diagnosis and Recommendation." Paper prepared for the meeting of the Millennium Development Goals Poverty Task Force Workshop. Bangkok, June.

these global figures hide great variations from country to country. The reductions are due in part to the modernization of the armed forces, in the course of which larger numbers of people and older weapons were substituted by fewer, newer weapons, but also to a genuine demilitarization in certain regions of the world, for example, in most parts of Europe.

The total number of conflicts worldwide continued to fall in the course of 2003 and 2004. 25 wars and 17 armed conflicts were fought in 2004, according to the data used in this *survey*. While differences in conflict data exist, depending on the source chosen, there nevertheless seems to be general agreement that there has been a decline not only in the number of wars but in their intensity. The most striking data relates to battlefield deaths which reached historic lows in the early 2000s. However a different picture emerges if civilian victims and deaths as a consequence of fighting are included. Still, the global decline in the number and intensity of wars contrasts sharply with the increases in military expenditures.

Conversion-related aspects of peacebuilding

One of the main causes of violent conflict is the rekindling of a conflict which has not been fully resolved. Hence, successful post-conflict peacebuilding constitutes an important contribution to conflict prevention. Conversion is central to post-conflict peacebuilding. Disbanding the military structures that supported a military conflict, that is, not only the demobilization and reintegration of former armed forces but also the rebuilding of new, efficient and democratically accountable security forces, is an indispensable component of post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction.

For this reason, the demobilization of fighting forces has become a standard item on the international community's priority list for post-war activities. In 2003 and 2004 demobilization took place in Angola, Colombia, Liberia and Rwanda, among

other countries. It is generally recognized that demobilization needs to be accompanied by measures to help the demobilized soldiers integrate themselves into society and earn an income. Sufficient support for such reintegration measures is, however, often difficult to mobilize. In a number of cases, including Liberia in 2004, the unfulfilled expectations of demobilized soldiers have become a new source of tension.

It is not only difficult to find sufficient resources for reintegration among development donors; there are also no simple recipes for the best strategy to help ex-combatants reintegrate. The strategy preferred by most donors in poor countries is to hand over money or goods, such as agricultural implements, to individuals to enable them to start a new, civilian, life. However, this can be risky for several reasons, one being that it privileges former combatants over and above other civilians who may have suffered equally or even more. An alternative to individual reintegration support is community-based reintegration, in which the benefits gained in return for the reintegration of former ex-combatants accrue to communities as a whole. One successful instance of such community-based reintegration has been carried out in the Republic of Congo (see Topic 2).

Yet another important issue in most post-conflict situations is physical security. The cases of Afghanistan and Iraq dominated the news in 2003/2004 because security there was so blatantly lacking, but they were only extreme examples of a general problem. In both cases, external troops were charged with providing security at the same time that local forces were being trained to eventually take over this task (see Topic 3). By now, the international community has provided support for the training of domestic forces in a wide spectrum of situations, ranging from the former Yugoslavia to Sierra Leone and Timor Leste. Increasingly, private military companies are given this job (see Topic 1). However, most of this support has been *ad hoc* and has focused on providing training. Experience in linking up to a wider security

sector reform agenda is still limited, particularly *vis-à-vis* the issue of security sector governance. More often than not, international support for security sector reform is not well integrated with other types of external assistance and support for the building up of democratic institutions.

Conflict and resources

As violent conflict and state decay continue, the mound of obstacles preventing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from being reached is getting bigger and bigger. This is one more reason why it is essential to actively prevent conflicts from becoming militant and states from failing. Conflicts and state decay have many causes. One factor for both, however—and this is one which has also been singled out by the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change—is resources. It is widely agreed that a decisive aspect of current war activity is the role that economic factors play, be it as a cause of war or as a prerequisite for sustaining warfare. Having said that, it would be wrong to maintain that resources are always a source of conflict, as their availability can also lead to cooperation.

Almost one-third of all the wars and major armed conflicts that were fought in 2004, 13 out of the 42, had a significant resource dimension (that is, resource exploitation either caused, triggered, exacerbated or financed the conflict). Several of the so-called ‘forgotten wars’, such as those in Indonesia (Aceh: natural gas; West Papua: copper, gold), in the Niger Delta of Nigeria (oil) and in Burma/Myanmar (opium, timber, gems) are cases in point. They are illustrative of the ‘resource curse’ thesis: an abundance of natural resources does not necessarily lead to development and wealth but can result in violence and the breaking down of society.

As such resources, including conflict resources, are marketed internationally and sold on global markets, globalization has not only made them more attractive to fight for but has also increased the opportunities of doing so. This in turn has shifted addi-

tional responsibility onto the shoulders of private economic actors operating in the relevant industries. By causing the social and environmental costs and the economic benefits of resource exploitation to be distributed unequally within societies, the extractive industries are already prone to influencing, or even instigating, conflict. This mismatch between benefits and costs is often associated with tensions and violence. Moreover, where resources become the object and source of violent conflict, the link between business activity and conflict is even more direct.

The international response to the increased importance of the role and responsibility of private economic actors, particularly companies in the extractive industries, has not been adequate, even if a number of initiatives run by individual companies, governments and NGOs do exist. Some of them, like the Publish What You Pay campaign, may be very promising, but only one of them is likely to provide a reliable, widely acceptable framework for private economic actors in the near future: the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for diamonds.

Interestingly, the issue of water shows that such frameworks do indeed prove viable. Water is widely seen as the prime conflict resource of the future, based on ‘worst-case’ projections of major water shortages by 2050 in up to sixty countries. Transboundary water reservoirs and rivers, of which there are almost 300 in the world, are generally considered the most conflict-prone. However, not only are incidences of recent fighting over water rare; water has even become a source of cooperation—and thus a catalyst for peace—in at least some parts of the world. An example is southern Africa. What becomes apparent there and in several other places is that the dependence on transboundary water courses can provide a strong incentive to cooperate. In actual fact, hundreds of bilateral and multilateral agreements are already in place dealing with specific concerns relating to international freshwater resources. The evidence available suggests that it is both economically prudent and politically wise to cooperate.

Conclusions

It is still possible to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), if priorities are changed. But they will definitely not be reached in all regions of the world, particularly Africa, without major policy changes. Moreover, conversion-related policies have a key supportive role to play in this historic endeavor, especially in as far as they facilitate the successful reintegration of combatants into civil societies, prevent the emergence or reemergence of conflict, and reallocate available resources to development purposes.

On the broader perspective, a clearer analytical view of the links between security and development can help make it easier to exploit the opportunities that conversion offers to development. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a timely and urgent challenge to move ahead on this agenda. Some ground has recently been laid, not least by the two major UN reports mentioned above. However, these reports—and research in general—still fall short on many counts, in particular in supplying clear and concrete recommendations for action. The *conversion survey*, as well as the work of BICC as a whole, is designed to make useful contributions to overcoming some of these deficits.