

# HALVING GLOBAL VIOLENCE BY 2030

GENEVA, SEPTEMBER 12 – 13, 2022

Report from the  
Second Meeting



# 1. Introduction

Convened by the **Pathfinders** for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies — a group of 43 member states, with international organizations and civil society — **Halving Global Violence** (HGV) draws on the best available evidence and a belief in the urgency and feasibility of delivering on the promise of SDG16.1, the international community’s mandate on global violence reduction by 2030.

The **HGV Task Force**—the initiative’s political and strategic steering group—is led by five member states at ministerial-level (Co-Chairs from Costa Rica, Korea, Liberia, South Africa, and Switzerland). The group also includes 15 Members from diverse UN agencies (SRSG Violence Against Children, WHO, UNDP) and heads of thematically and geographically-diverse civil society organizations (Instituto Igarapé, ACCORD, Small Arms Survey, End Violence Against Children). Moreover, ten Expert Advisors serve as the Task Force’s policy and research ‘brain trust’. In addition, the Task Force boasts representation from highly-visible youth leaders and two initiatives, **Peace in Our Cities** (PIOC), and the **Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control** (GENSAC), which ensure cross-fertilization with the arenas of urban violence and city leadership, and small arms control and gender equality, respectively.

On September 12 and 13, 2022 and in collaboration with the Global Initiative on Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) and the government of Switzerland, the Pathfinders hosted the Task Force’s second meeting in Geneva – its first in-person convening following a pandemic-determined virtual initial **meeting “at” Wilton Park** in June 2021. This report offers a brief summary of those discussions, as well as the next steps for the Task Force’s efforts. As the discussions were conducted under the Chatham House Rule, participants’ contributions are not individually identified.



*Pictured (left to right): Mark Shaw, Director of GI-TOC; H.E. Patricia Danzi, Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Sarah Cliffe, Director of the Center on International Cooperation; H.E. Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development of South Africa. In the background: Daniel Mack, Program Director, Halving Global Violence at Pathfinders/CIC; Bojan Francuz, Program Officer at Pathfinders/CIC*

## 2. Context

In 2021 the HGV Task Force was created, **convened** for the first time, and publicly **launched**. It issued a **statement** highlighting the primacy of violence reduction in the still elusive ‘post-pandemic’ period, and was spotlighted in the UN SG’s **Our Common Agenda**. Building on these early cornerstones, in 2022 the Task Force turned to a concrete set of violence reduction solutions and action-oriented research, to be crystallized in its **Flagship Report**. The report, following in the footsteps of the Pathfinders’ Grand Challenges on **Justice** and **Inequality**, is slated for publication at the end of 2023.

The initial Task Force meeting agreed that urban and interpersonal violence—particularly with a lens on gender and masculinities—should be essential priorities, and subsequent consultations added a request from Task Force members to bring evidence on the ‘costs of violence’ and the business case for investment in violence reduction. Consultations have likewise raised requests to engage in practical local and national experiences, seeking rapid violence reduction and developmental gains in select local settings that can bring lessons learned to the international policy discussions.

For its initial in-person discussions in Geneva, the Task Force therefore set out three main objectives, which had been discussed and prepared beforehand through three virtual, informal Task Force convenings between April and July 2022, as well as discussions with Geneva-based organizations:

Discuss lessons learned from **national and local practical** policy and program initiatives;

Present and discuss a baseline study on the **business case for violence reduction**, agreeing on next steps to ensure that this ‘costs of violence’ work can help generate practical shifts in national budget discussion and amongst development partners; and

Design and approve HGV’s research priorities, **including an outline of the 2023 Flagship Report**, with a focus on practical solutions and the initial findings from both piloting initiatives and ‘costs of violence’ research.

In addition, in separate meetings, Pathfinders and some Task Force members sought to **engage the Geneva ‘peace ecosystem’** in a two-way conversation, seeking ways in which HGV can contribute to current efforts and receiving feedback and guidance from a broad array of organizations and experts.

### 3. National and local lessons learned

Several important practical experiences were discussed in the meeting, including national experiences in South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and local-level initiatives in Brazil and Colombia. Principal lessons learned included:

- The need to make **people-centered violence reduction**—improvements in people’s daily lives—a focus of the Task Force Flagship Report.
- The growing risks posed by **urban violence** across all continents and the role that **gender dynamics and norms of masculinity** that glorify violence play in violence trends.
- That **success is possible** – as shown by a deep dive into Pelotas (Brazil) where homicides were reduced by over 80 percent in 5 years. National level experiences covered in South Africa, Colombia, and DRC also showed the potential for fast violence reduction in line with the Task Force goal to halve global violence. Experiences in South Africa, Colombian cities, and DRC highlighted that progress can also be subject to **setbacks and spillover pressures** from neighboring areas, and that comprehensive approaches that involve security and policing strategies, as well as social and economic interventions, including close collaboration between the national and local level, are needed.
- The South Africa experience raised the importance of **transparent and accurate data and evidence on violence**, and participants agreed that **political leadership** is crucial in this regard. Leaders need to welcome data and evidence, even when this is sometimes inconvenient in the short-term, if they are to make a dent in the problem. Supporting political leadership and providing the right incentives for leaders applies at community, municipal, and provincial, as well as national levels. These efforts depend on dialogue and integration with local actors who understand the communities, speak their languages, and are trusted by citizens.
- The DRC’s experience raised the difficulties in some contexts of **too rigidly separating urban violence and civil or communal conflict**, and the need to take a pragmatic approach to categories.
- Participants raised the question of the **role of the private sector**, both negative and positive, in violence reduction efforts. Local examples were given of positive private sector involvement.

There was considerable discussion of the **need to link local and national efforts, and to consider the connections with global policy issues**, like drugs and small arms, which no one country can address alone. This last point came up strongly across all the sessions during the meeting and is addressed further below.

## 4. The business case for violence reduction

### OVERALL EVIDENCE

A comprehensive report on the business case for violence reduction was presented and discussed at the meeting. Highlights include:

SDG16.1 covers **injuries and the perception of safety, as well as violent death**. The scale of each issue is significantly different, as is its regional and gender incidence. While the public focus is, understandably, often on homicides, and the U.S. and much of Latin America looms large in that respect, non-lethal violence is even more pervasive around the world, with

While the data has significant gaps and quality problems, evidence across a range of country settings shows that three types of intervention can work: **individual interventions, such as psychological counselling; community-driven initiatives, such as liaison between community leaders and the security forces; and national level policies, such as gun control.**

severe repercussions for survivors. High rates of assault characterize many countries, while the dozen countries with the worst rates are all in Sub-Saharan Africa. Gender disaggregated data was presented showing that women often face higher rates of assault than men, as well as high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV), which is experienced by about one in seven women globally every year. Fear of violence is also pronounced, with around 30 percent of people fearful to walk in their neighborhood at night, rising as high as 88 percent among women in Afghanistan.

While the data has significant gaps and quality problems, evidence across a range of country settings shows that three types of intervention can work: **individual interventions, such as psychological counselling; community-driven initiatives, such as liaison between community leaders and the security forces; and national level policies, such as gun control.** The most promising and cost-effective strategies include targeting specific at-risk places, people and behaviors, and investing in changing norms and behaviors at the community and individual level, with most successful interventions often being cross-sectoral or multi-pronged. Participants also raised cultural interventions, such as norm-changing messaging in “telenovelas”, as effective national or regional approaches.

In the discussion, **participants gave strong support for a focus by the Task Force not only on homicide, but also on assaults, intimate partner violence, and fear of violence constraining activities.**



Several participants noted that the **global and regional level of policy** are important for reducing local violence. Many problems, such as organized crime, drug policy, conflict spillovers, large scale population displacement, and illicit financial flows cannot be solved at the national level. We need better evidence on priority regional and global policies and their impact, along with the individual, community-based, and national policies highlighted in the “business case for investment” report.

**With the proviso of considering global and regional policies and links with armed conflict, there was continued support for focusing on interpersonal, urban, and intimate partner violence.** This is not only because of their prevalence and universality vis-à-vis conflict-related violence, but because of the potential to place practical measures on international and national agendas. These forms of violence have relatively robust evidence in terms of “what works” and success stories to draw from as guiding examples. In addition, focusing future Task Force policy recommendations on “people-centered” violence reduction may be better able to gain political traction in increasingly fragmented UN arenas because the concept is less politicized in the eyes of many member states than a traditional emphasis on conflict.

**Participants agreed that interventions for prevention—social protections, changing norms and behaviors, legislation in key areas—are more cost effective than “aftermath” interventions.** Yet, as one participant noted, “prevention is difficult to justify – what attracts money is crisis”, so the work of the Task Force on the “return on investment” for violence prevention remains crucial.

One participant suggested to general agreement that **the Pathfinders could act as a platform to bring together evidence on the business case for investment with some of the large operational agencies**, such as the UN and the multilateral development banks, who can support national and local governments with analysis, advice, capacity-building, and investment.

## THE MULTILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Despite the need to double-down on local and national levels, participants also noted that these efforts do not take place in a vacuum. Rather, many of the drivers of violence around the world are **global** in nature, raising serious policy challenges as to what can be achieved locally if international headwinds are strong.

The current **challenging multilateral environment** shows no signs of being ephemeral, and trends of increased authoritarianism, erosion of the rule of law, and re-occurring democratic rupture are tremendously worrisome for future violence levels. Complexities brought by increased urbanization, political polarization, rising inequality (within and between nations), climate change and migration patterns further muddy the waters. Within the geopolitical context, divided perceptions between countries and regions on the invasion of Ukraine, including concerns around double standards and the effects of the rising food, energy and debt crisis, are constraining multilateral action on other issues. These multiple crises, in turn, create a loss of credibility in the multilateral system, undermining its ability to act for violence reduction.

Seeking solutions for these challenges on the global level, and perhaps inspired by the meeting's location, several participants recalled the "[Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development](#)" and the relative dearth of similar international normative or advocacy efforts. Some of lessons learned from the Geneva Declaration process still hold, such as realizing, "you don't need consensus, only a critical mass," and the need to act both inside and outside the UN. As such, it is essential to find creative ways to **link global violence reduction with the UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda and its 'New Agenda for Peace', and look for "hooks" in upcoming multilateral milestones such as the SDG Summit and the 'Summit of the Future'.**

Meeting participants specifically considered **the relationship of the analysis in the future Flagship Report to other forms of violence which are volatile at present, including social unrest due to economic shocks and rising inflation, and civil and interstate conflict.** Members encouraged the secretariat to keep close track of how these risks evolve, but nonetheless to maintain the focus on the daily, people-centered problems of interpersonal, urban, and intimate partner violence. The Task Force should also signal that this is a process continuing to 2030, and while the Flagship Report will focus on these forms of violence, other links to broader conflict and peacebuilding may be more centrally addressed in subsequent work.

## **THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS: TACKLING ORGANIZED CRIME AND IMPLEMENTING GENDER-RESPONSIVE SMALL ARMS CONTROL AS PILLARS FOR GLOBAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION**

In addition to discussing violence reduction challenges and prospects on the local, national, and international level, Task Force meeting participants also engaged on two transversal thematic issues which cut through and connect all aforementioned geographic spaces: **organized crime and gender-responsive small arms control.**

Led by GI-TOC, Task Force participants had an opportunity to debate the interplay between corruption, organized crime, and violence. As noted above, local levels of violence around the world are intimately connected to the global financial infrastructure and other international policies, such as the unintended byproducts of drug prohibitions. As such, continued action on illicit financial flows, trafficking, international norms on small arms and drug policy are important for the success of local efforts. Developed countries have a responsibility to drive forward domestic strategies and policies that affect violence elsewhere. **Community resilience responses to organized crime, trafficking, corruption, and their links to violence are promising but require complementarity with national and global responses.**

In cities, the locus of most of the world's violence, the **linkages between political corruption and violence** are particularly relevant, with "violence entrepreneurs" (such as militias in the case of Rio de Janeiro) taking over public offices (including by traditional electoral means), and levying taxation on the population, removing areas from the control of the State and democratic governance. While state responses are essential to disrupt and uproot patterns of criminal governance, strong state "mano dura" responses may cause a vicious cycle of violence. Violence needs to be dislodged but must be replaced by improvements in the rule of law. "You can't simply arrest your way out of this problem."

Drawing on the experiences from attending GENSAC members, the Task Force meeting also discussed **strategies to advance gender-responsive small arms control** as a vector of broader violence reduction efforts, which one participant noted, “are more political than technical.” Another participant posited that in some countries the political will exists, but women are alienated from this arena, deemed “a man’s world”, so capacity-building is essential to integrate women. Relatedly, the issue of masculinities must be tackled, to change attitudes and allow for greater women’s participation in small arms control efforts. Another participant suggested that while women’s participation in this arena is important, it should not be seen as the only indicator for success. Rather than technical knowledge, integration must be political, with women leading concrete discussions around community safety — deliberations that must be conducted locally, not in international hubs such as Geneva or New York.

Here, too, the discussion regarding **international opportunities to advance small arms control, beyond the existing UN instruments and frameworks** came to the fore, with participants suggesting that broader agendas (political commitments rather than legally-binding instruments) afford more scope to be ambitious and potentially transformational. Rather than the “floor” of lowest common denominators provided by instruments such as the UN Program of Action on SALW or the Arms Trade Treaty, we should strive for aspirational instruments that can move the needle towards proper national and international regulations on firearms.



*Pictured (left to right): H.E. Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development of South Africa; Daniel de Torres, Director of Small Arms Survey; Farida Nabourema, Network Coordinator of GENSAC; H.E. Irène Esambo Diata, Minister-delegate in charge of the Disabled and Other Vulnerable Persons of the Democratic Republic of Congo*



## 5. The making of the Flagship Report

Finally, the Geneva meeting participants had a detailed discussion about the outline of, and process towards, the publication of the HGV Task Force Flagship Report. The report will be the culmination of the thinking, research, and policy choices made by the Task Force, and will present a “menu” of concrete policy recommendations to the international community. Once published in late 2023, the Flagship Report will represent a tipping point, where Halving Global Violence moves from action-oriented research to focusing on the advocacy and communications tools needed to accelerate the adoption of the policies and programs proposed.

In June 2022, an online consultation canvassed initial input from the Task Force on the structure and substance of the Flagship Report. The consultation drew several recommendations and was particularly informed by presentations by the Pathfinders’ Justice for All team and End Violence Against Children on their lessons learned from similar publications. Among the recommendations from Task Force members and partners, the following were noteworthy:

- The process of building a Flagship Report needs to be open and inclusive, as well as realistic in terms of the existing (limited) parameters: timing, capacities, funding.
- Make use of the resources that your partners and networks have to offer and rely on their expertise.
- Consider advocacy and communication (thus also audience and robust use of infographics) from the get-go: a report that never leaves someone’s bookshelf changes nothing.
- Be intentional with clear, new, impactful data that will motivate the audience to take action.
- Touch on many aspects of violence and explore innovative ways to approach these topics, reflecting on the intersectional nature of many forms of violence.
- Highlight the progress that still needs to be made as we reach the halfway point of the SDGs, but with a hopeful and action-oriented tone.

During its September 2022 in-person meeting, the Task Force further consolidated these discussions, making choices regarding the **Flagship Report’s structure and content**, and providing elements so the Pathfinders secretariat can produce a full draft outline, as well as a production work plan for the report, in the following weeks. Some basic guidelines included establishing that the full report will run roughly 100 pages long, will be written in a style accessible to non-experts, and will include both a two-page executive summary and an 8-10 page policy note with main messages and distilled policy recommendations.

The report will have a “yes, we can” tone, focusing on “bright spots” rather than the “dark side”, presenting a **menu of policy choices/solutions** with known results, peppered with concrete examples of successful implementation resulting in significant reductions in violence, and should be translated and disseminated in Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

Perhaps most importantly, this is envisioned as **action-oriented** research, so it will be imperative to inspire concrete action, spur programs and policies that can directly affect violence levels on the ground. It will spotlight that we have a **critical mass** in terms of a body of evidence and experience of **‘what works’ in violence reduction**, and will provide concrete recommendations on how use it. Finally, the report will showcase momentum, victories, and instances of progress, as positive messages galvanize, engage, and empower the audience, giving them a needed sense of agency.

As per general structure, the report is slated to have **three main sections**, interwoven with ‘features’ or boxes throughout – these may include thematic and geographic case studies such as the link between climate change and violence, youth as actors for change, the role of inequalities in driving violence, and young men as victims and perpetrators of violence. The outline of the report, which would draw significantly on the “costs of violence” research Pathfinders is currently developing, would run as follows:

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- The prevalence of violence
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#### Section II – What Works to Reduce Violence

Evidence and emerging conclusions on “what works”, highlighting ways to overcome silos across different forms of violence

- Individual and community level interventions
- National Reforms
- Global Approaches

#### Section III –How to Accelerate Progress

- Focus on forms of violence with greatest prevalence and malleability (known, applicable, cost-effective solutions), and capture and share results
- Integrated approach between different communities of practice and overlapping/intersectional risk factors
- Global links and entry points — Our Common Agenda, New Agenda for Peace, SDG Summit, Summit of the Future

#### Summary of recommendations, by stakeholder

- National governments
- Local governments
- Multilateral organizations (UN, IFIs and regional)
- Civil society and advocates
- Private sector
- Philanthropic actors

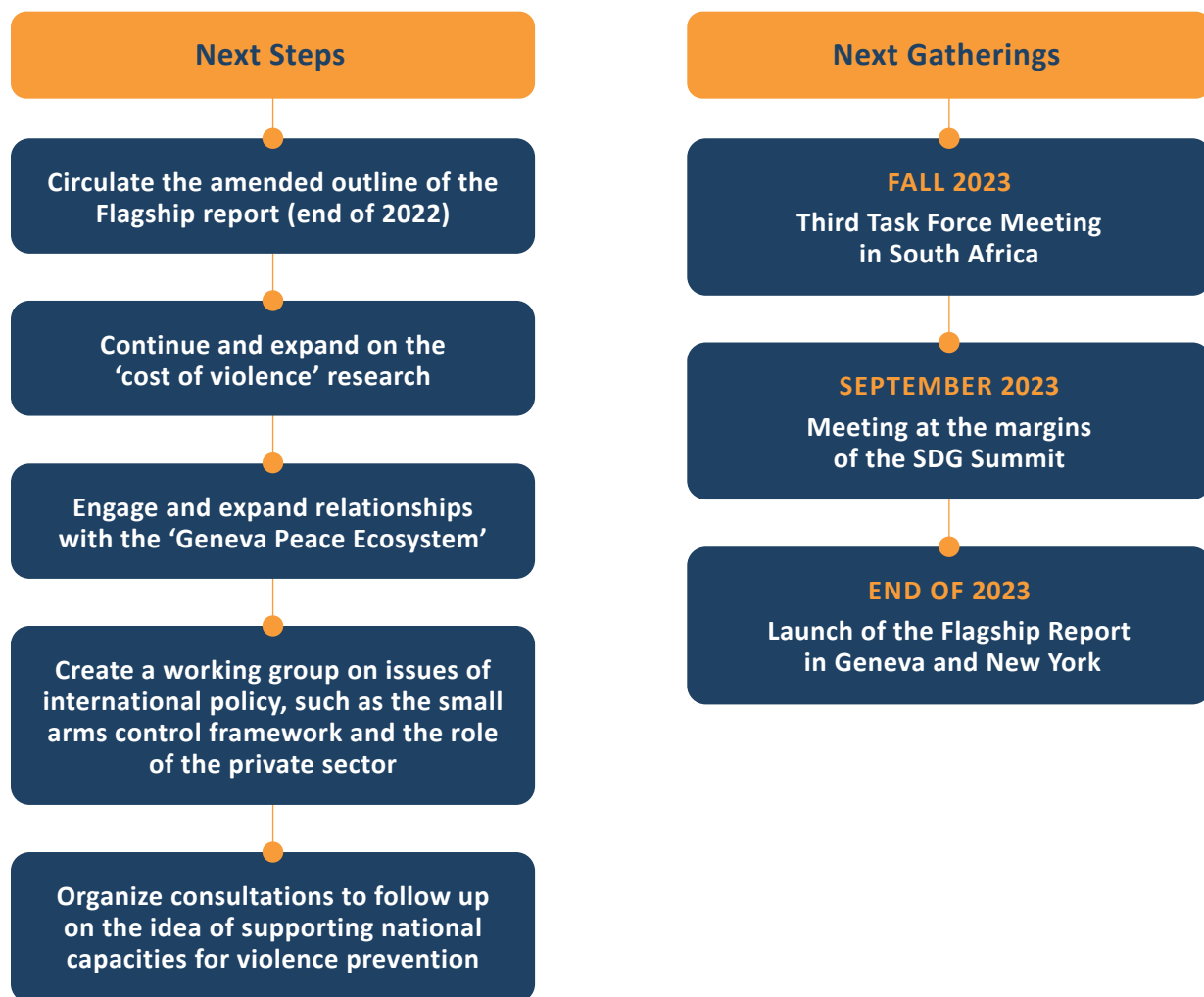
Throughout, the report will strive to show **the path between SDG16.1’s midpoint and achievement**: attention to all forms of violence but particularly those with greatest prevalence and malleability (known, applicable, cost-effective solutions), integrated approaches between different communities of practice and overlapping/intersectional risk factors, increased political attention and ambition, and large financial investments in violence prevention.

Looking ahead, participants considered the aftermath of the Flagship Report’s publication, that is, how to render the report an actual **practical tool** to mobilize local, national, regional, and international action, noting that the report needs to be a platform that can be, “used by people on the ground.” Some participants suggested that the report would need to be **tailored to highlight regional differences and allow for specific approaches and recommendations for different regions of the world**, including looping in regional organizations such as the **Organization of American States and the African Union**. Consultations on the national and regional level could be useful to ensure a “bottom up” approach to the recommendations, ensuring the report is relevant to vastly different contexts.

Noting that **the usual “paper report” may in some ways be outdated or insufficient**, some participants suggested various approaches to spread its messages, including infographics, podcasts, videos, etc. As such, communications and media experts should be part of the deliberations from the outset, in order to target the public, while advocacy specialists would provide insights on how to construct and disseminate the report in a way to influence leaders and decision makers. Importantly, the advent of social media and influencers has created new avenues for influencing governments and should thus be capitalized on. Ultimately, the report needs to get violence reduction back “on the radar” of the international community, making it a central topic of the political agenda at the different levels (local, national, regional, global) and to be able to affect public policies by incentivizing action in this arena.

## 6. The path ahead

As foreshadowed above, the Task Force has its work cut out for it in the coming years, both considering the ambition of the efforts and the dwindling time frame to achieve results in line with the SDGs. In the words of one participant, “2030 is soon.” As such, participants agreed on several next steps that would pave the way for the Task Force’s efforts in 2023:



- Over the coming weeks, the Pathfinders secretariat will circulate an amended outline for the Flagship Report, taking into account the feedback received on the version presented in Geneva and further Task Force guidance, with an eye to having a finalized and collectively agreed ‘skeleton’ before the end of 2022. In addition, a production workplan will be shared identifying practical steps and the process to bridge the outline and the final Flagship Report;
- The “costs of violence” research—which was warmly welcomed by participants particularly given the useful drawing together of data on different forms of violence—will continue to be developed as a backbone also for the Flagship Report, extended further based on the Task Force’s feedback and guidance. In addition to potentially being published as a ‘working paper’, key areas for extension over the coming months may include applications of costing to specific national contexts, which could be supported by Co-Chairs outreach within their governments and Task Force participating institutions;



- One of the Geneva meeting's aforementioned objectives ("Engage the Geneva 'peace ecosystem'"), which was kicked-off by a rich and frank dialogue between selected Task Force members and several organizations and experts representing the Geneva peace community, co-hosted by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and Geneva Cities Hub following the conclusion of the formal Task Force meeting, will continue to be pursued through further consultations on how the two communities could discover synergies and collaborate. This may be done particularly in terms of linking local and city efforts with global policy conversations, and looping in peacebuilding organization's presence and experience in the field to the HGV Flagship Report;
- Pathfinders will pursue the prospect of supporting both a Task Force working group on issues of international policy that could be ripe for further or renewed action, such as the above discussion regarding small arms control frameworks, as well as research on the role of the private sector in violence reduction efforts;
- Further consultations will take place to follow up on the idea of supporting national capacities for violence prevention, combining Pathfinders efforts with UN operational agencies to direct attention to the issue, share the message, and help countries build up their measures by providing technical assistance and supporting their capacity to develop national violence reduction plans;
- The Co-Chairs and members welcomed the intent of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to join the group, and the interest expressed by Colombia and Timor-Leste;
- For the Task Force's next gatherings, the Secretariat will continue ongoing consultations with Co-Chairs and members to finalize the scheduling of 2023 convenings, potentially including a convening in the Fall, which South Africa has offered to host, a meeting at the margins of the SDG Summit in September, and Geneva and New York launches for the Flagship Report in late 2023.

All in all, the commitment and energy visible during the deliberations gave the clear impression, in the words of one participant, that with its first in-person meeting the Task Force had, "climbed a mountain, but still had other mountains to summit." Discussions in Geneva, as suggested by another participant, had perhaps moved the group from "depressed" given the world's violence dynamics and levels, to, "anxious, but then to committed and realistic, now one step away from being optimistic," as we look at the path ahead.





*Pictured: The Halving Global Violence Task Force, September 2022*