Building the Foundations and Start of Transition Processes in the Security Sector

Summary of Key International Lessons and Practice

Policy Brief

The following policy brief outlines the key findings, lessons, and good practice in strengthening security sector governance and improving effectiveness and accountability of security sector institutions in transition contexts. The policy brief highlights there is no single template for transition and draws on transition contexts spanning in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. This summary is a summary of commonality in the underlying general principles guiding effective and durable transition processes.

- **National Ownership**. The key to success of any transition is achieving national ownership and political commitment by all key national stakeholders from within the security sector and the broader society.
- **Common Vision**. It is critical to avoid fragmentation in the transition process and seek to build consensus and a common national vision for transition.
- **Realism**. Many transition processes fail because the planning and strategy for transition is often unrealistic in terms of political context and affordability.
- **International Standards and Obligations**. While national ownership is key in sustaining transition processes, there is a need to also align the core objectives and approach to match international standards and policy frameworks.
- **Temporal Factors**. Transformation requires a long-term vision and commitment. The best case when political and financial conditions permit take 5-6 years while a more typical transition process requires a 10-20 year perspective.
- **Hierarchy of Policy**. Most recent successful examples of transition include constitutional reform, development of a policy document (i.e. National Security Policy or Strategy) and subordinate Armed Forces Laws to mandate operational control to the armed forces.
- **Civilian led governance.** Establishment of clear ownership and division of responsibility for policy making and operational control of the security sector (roles of

Ministers, Heads of State and subordinate Military Commanders within structures such as a National Security Council).

- **Transitional Justice**. Transitional justice processes are typically interdependent with most transition processes for the security sector. There are activities such as vetting, criminal prosecution or reconciliation the key to success is **temporal**, typically up to 10-20 years and a focus on **non-recurrence**.
- **Establishing a Single Armed Force.** Most successful transitions have focused on developing strengths in existing institutions and balancing inclusion and effectiveness whilst supporting integration of irregular forces.

DCAF is ready to provide support to development of lessons and principles from case studies and help coordinate expert explanations to all stakeholders. Support will, and should, evolve, as stakeholder demand dictates.