

# disarmament forum

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THE COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF SMALL ARMS  
IN WEST AFRICA



UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

# UNIDIR

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The dynamics of small arms and light weapons traffic, circulation and use in West Africa are complex, and result in a tangled web of regional insecurity, violence, illicit acts and criminal networks. Unraveling this web requires human and financial resources, strong organizations and governments, and engaged civil society actors. Woven together to combat the small arms problem, these elements offer both optimism and concrete security benefits at both the human and regional security levels. Civil society, regional organizations and agreements such as the ECOWAS Convention and the Millennium Development Goals are interlinked, their efforts synergistic, and together result in a stronger and more secure region.

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* examines small arms in West Africa, and looks at some of the activities being undertaken to combat the problem, from regional initiatives to civil society projects, from technical and legal fixes to building on the link between disarmament and development.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will kick off our tenth anniversary year. Launched in 1999, *Disarmament Forum* is the sole journal of the United Nations dedicated to disarmament and security issues. Over the last nine years, *Disarmament Forum* has addressed a wide array of subjects, from fissile materials and nuclear terrorism, to regional conflicts, to the role of civil society in disarmament initiatives, and the relationship between human rights and security.

Our anniversary issue will comprise a collection of short, forward-looking contributions by world-renowned experts and personalities from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. All contributors will address the same topic: to share with our readers a single idea to increase security or to significantly influence a specific disarmament issue.

UNIDIR hosted two events in New York during the First Committee of the Sixty-third General Assembly of the United Nations. On 20 October, UNIDIR, the Global Security Institute (GSI) and the Secure World Foundation (SWF) hosted a seminar entitled "Prospects for Preserving a Cooperative Security Framework in Outer Space". The panel, chaired by Ambassador Robert Grey (Director of GSI's Bipartisan Security Group), comprised Dr Ray Williamson (Executive Director of SWF), Victor Vasiliev (Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations in Geneva), and Nicolas Gérard (UNIDIR). Audio files of the presentations are available on UNIDIR's website.

On 22 October, UNIDIR held a seminar to launch the publication *Implementing Resolution 1540: the Role of Regional Organizations*. This seminar presented the research findings of a two-year project to examine the experiences of organizations in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia and the Pacific to identify how they can assist their members with their commitments to implement resolution 1540. UNIDIR Deputy Director Dr Christiane Agboton-Johnson chaired the seminar, with opening remarks by Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Chairman of the 1540 Committee and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, and by Ambassador Mona Juul, Deputy Permanent

Representative of Norway. The publication's editor, Dr Lawrence Scheinman, spoke on how regional organizations could assist with implementation, and the specific example of South-East Asia and the South Pacific was presented by contributor Tanya Ogilvie-White. You can listen to the presentations as well as download the full text of the publication from our website.

UNIDIR is delighted to announce that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Theresa Hitchens as the Institute's new Director. Ms. Hitchens brings to UNIDIR over twenty years of experience in security, defense, disarmament and non-proliferation research and analysis. She is leaving her position as Director of the Center for Defense Information (CDI) in Washington DC, and where she has led CDI's Space Security Project. Her previous experience includes serving as Research Director of the Washington affiliate of the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), as well as an editor at *Defense News*.

We are also proud to announce that former UNIDIR Director Dr Patricia Lewis has been awarded the 2009 Joseph A. Burton Forum Award from the American Physical Society "for her contributions to arms control and international security, through experiments to demonstrate verifiability of arms control treaties and through her leadership of two international institutes, VERTIC and UNIDIR". Dr Lewis is now Deputy Director and Scientist in Residence at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

***Kerstin Vignard***

## SPECIAL COMMENT

In 2006, the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms estimated that 8 million small arms and light weapons were transiting through the sub-region. The same year, the Heads of States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a convention to regulate the production, circulation and civilian possession of small arms and light weapons as a collective measure against the phenomenon that drives much of the insecurity in West Africa.

Undoubtedly, the findings of the ongoing ECOWAS assessments will provide up-to-date information on the current situation in the sub-region and will allow us to grasp the real impact of small arms proliferation on security in West Africa. In particular, we already know that the availability of small arms accounts for a considerable number of deaths and injuries in the civilian population, allowing interpersonal and inter-communal tensions to escalate into skirmishes and eventually full-fledged conflict. Their circulation takes advantage of the porosity of borders, making disarmament efforts particularly challenging. These borders also facilitate and reinforce the presence and activities of illegal transborder networks such as drug smuggling and human trafficking. The existence of armed groups operating outside of state control undermines state governance, challenges the rule of law and jeopardizes security as a global concept. By this I refer to human security, an approach that encompasses food, economic, social, sanitary and environmental security needs at the individual and the community levels.

Furthermore, widespread insecurity hampers the provision of social services such as in the fields of health and education, and access to food and water. Insecurity impedes long-term socio-economic development by forcing people to move, leaving their harvests and businesses unattended. It also diverts public spending away from key sectors of development such as health, agriculture, engineering and education.

It should not be forgotten that, as in other regions, insecurity in West Africa invariably affects the most vulnerable portions of the population such as women, youth and ethnic minorities. In situations where the rule of law is disrupted, a high degree of sexual and gender-based violence is generated. Clearly, there is need to adopt a gender lens in discussions on peace and security in the region and for greater support for women's efforts towards conflict prevention, resolution and relief.

The growing awareness of the interconnectedness of the threats to security and of the need for a holistic approach to building security has led to the adoption of key instruments at the sub-regional level in the fields of prevention of conflict, human trafficking and drug trafficking. In particular, thanks to the tireless work of the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light

Weapons could enter into force in 2009. The Convention will be a crucial step towards effective small arms control within the sub-region and solid progress towards the achievement of long-term security and human development.

***Ndiaro Ndiaye***

Deputy Director

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## Small arms and light weapons transfer in West Africa: a stock-taking

Francis Langumba KEILI

West Africa has for many years been the most unstable subregion on the continent. Since 1960, of the 15 member states that make up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), most have been through several military coups, 37 of which were successful. One causative factor for such unprecedented insurrection is the movement of small arms and light weapons (SALW) throughout the subregion. The uncontrolled movement of SALW has exacerbated conflicts and brought destruction, untold hardship, poverty and underdevelopment.

### *What is the magnitude of small arms proliferation in the subregion?*

The conflict-ridden West African subregion is a showcase of uncontrolled SALW proliferation. Vast quantities of arms have flooded the region despite their rampant misuse by state and non-state actors alike. The widespread availability of small arms to abusive actors poses a threat of unprecedented magnitude to West Africa, far greater than that of HIV/AIDS in terms of its socio-economic and human consequences. Because of this proliferation, the fabric of the subregion itself is rapidly changing, moving toward self-destruction. This can be observed in three different areas:

- the easy availability and use of SALW is leading to tragic consequences, not only for combatants but also for civilians, who form the majority of casualties—people are losing their lives, their health, their families, their homes and their livelihoods;
- the growing illegal character of the flow of SALW in West Africa is transforming the bulk of arms transfers from a legal, accountable trade to what is better described as trafficking. What is perhaps most alarming is the number of state and non-state actors involved in the network of illegal transfers of light weaponry; and
- the most significant and far-reaching consequence of SALW proliferation, beyond the huge economic cost and social crisis, is the shift in cultural values—West African societies have been weaponized and a culture of violence now prevails in much of the subregion.

SALW are extreme tools of violence in West Africa for several reasons. Small arms are durable, highly portable, easily concealed, simple to use, extremely lethal and possess legitimate military, police and civilian uses. In West Africa, these weapons are cheap and widely available; they are also

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lightweight, and so can be used by child soldiers, who have played such a significant role in recent conflicts in West Africa.

SALW therefore remain the primary weapons of intra- and inter-communal feuds, local wars, armed insurrections, armed rebel activities and terrorism throughout the subregion. Every West African country has experienced widespread violence in which small arms featured. SALW have particularly fuelled overlapping and uncontained conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, and the subregion is still struggling to survive ongoing conflicts in which small arms play a central and destabilizing role. Millions of West Africans have been killed or displaced as a result, and an immeasurable amount of property has been destroyed. SALW have been used to grossly violate human rights, to facilitate the practice of bad governance, to subvert constitutions, to carry out coups d'état and to create and maintain a general state of fear, insecurity and instability. They are also being employed for non-political and non-conflict-related crime and violence.

The true magnitude of the problems caused by SALW proliferation in West Africa cannot be accurately quantified, as so many of the effects are hard to measure—such as fear and want. However, there is no dispute that small arms have had a devastating effect on development, governance and everyday life for West Africans.

The porous nature of West Africa's borders plays a significant role in proliferation. Unmanned border crossing points and widespread corruption facilitate illicit trafficking in small arms. Despite the ending of many conflicts in the subregion, smuggling and the illicit trade in small arms are reported to be on the increase.

Proliferation has also been facilitated by legal means. During conflict, some states in West Africa have liberalized gun possession laws in order to stimulate civilian arming. Arms were directly distributed to paramilitary groups by governments in order to fight rebel forces during the civil wars in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but legislation was also liberalized, and proved a major driver of small arms diffusion.

Finally, the fragmentation of the political and economic space in West Africa has shaped the availability and circulation of SALW. The deterioration of many West African states' capacity to enforce the rule of law has blurred the boundaries between legal and illicit markets, enabling a thriving trade in SALW. Politicians have even been known to acquire weapons from illegal dealers to arm security personnel during election season.

### ***How do SALW arrive and circulate within West Africa?***

In principle, small arms are not supposed to be flowing into West Africa, as in 1998 the members of ECOWAS pledged not to import, export or manufacture SALW.<sup>1</sup> This moratorium has since become a legally binding and permanent convention,<sup>2</sup> but both measures have been routinely flouted, with disastrous consequences for human rights and regional security. Contributing factors include lax arms export controls in supplier countries, subregional allies who provide cover and sometimes financing (for example Burkina Faso facilitated the supply of arms to Liberia, despite a UN embargo<sup>3</sup>), and transnational arms dealers motivated by profit to break the law. Another key factor is the ability of embargoed buyers to use misappropriated funds or trade valuable commodities, such as diamonds or timber concessions, for arms.

The Small Arms Survey notes that Nigeria has porous borders on both its land and sea edges, allowing gun smuggling from a variety of countries.<sup>4</sup> Many of these weapons come from war-torn countries elsewhere in Africa. Others have found that many of the arms smuggling rings operate out

of Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria.<sup>5</sup> The smugglers use speed-boats to connect to the high seas, and then ferry the arms back to shore.

Looking at the armed conflict in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, SALW are brought into the delta from various locations. Most of the weapons—such as the Russian AK-47, the German G-3, the Belgian FN-FAL, Czech machine guns and Serbian rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs)—are supplied by illegal dealers and sellers, who are paid through the proceeds of bunkered (stolen) oil. In October 2006 the Rivers State Police Commissioner arrested Chris Ndudi Njoku, a Nigerian businessman who specialized in importing prohibited firearms into Nigeria. In his possession were G-3s, AK-47s and Beretta automatic rifles. European dealers are also involved in the trade with their Nigerian counterparts, but rarely have to face justice.<sup>6</sup>

On a smaller scale, weapons are brought in to West Africa by poorly paid soldiers who have served in peacekeeping missions, for example in Liberia or Sierra Leone, and who often return home with their weapons to sell them on to combatants and gun dealers.

Once in the subregion, weapons circulate in a number of ways. During an armed conflict, there is a continual circulation of arms between factions, as weapons are captured and stolen by all sides. Such sources of arms remain significant, even for insurgent groups that have secured access to an external supply of arms in the early stages of the conflict. For example, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone had all secured supply lines either prior to the outbreak of violence or early in the conflict, but nonetheless continued to obtain stocks within the conflict complex, through theft and capture.

Some of the weapons in armed groups' stockpiles are acquired during attacks on police and military armouries. Leakages from poorly constructed and insecure stockpiles are also a chronic problem in West African countries with large numbers of weapons, both during and before and after conflict. Underresourced security forces may be unable to secure stockpiles properly, and poorly paid individuals may resort to using their official weapons for criminal activities or may rent them out to others to supplement their income. SALW also circulate through the desertion of military personnel. Many of these legal weapons find their way into the illicit market.

But not all weapons are externally manufactured and sourced: artisan firearms are now being made in such profusion that they constitute a major problem across West Africa. Blacksmiths have a significant role in the manufacture and circulation of firearms in Ghana, and this trend has spread to other countries within the subregion. Made with heavy, cast iron barrels, aluminium firing mechanisms and rough wooden handles, these weapons are the pride and joy of hundreds of blacksmiths and illicit cooperatives of artisans across Ghana.

There are an estimated 75,000 illegal craft guns now circulating in Ghana, constituting the vast majority of the 125,000 unregistered weapons in the country. Around 80% of the weapons seized by the police and the Ghanaian security forces are locally manufactured.<sup>7</sup> According to a governance campaigner for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Industrial weapons are getting harder and harder to get in Ghana because of the restrictions on the international arms trade and the local guns are filling the gap. They may look heavy and crude but they are no less dangerous".<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that up to one-third of the 400 murders in Ghana every year are committed with a craft gun.

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At least 400 blacksmiths in southern Ghana are now serving the industry, each capable of making up to 80 guns per year. The picture is similar in other parts of West Africa: craft guns were widely used in the civil wars that killed hundreds of thousands in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and countries including Mali have been pinpointed as major manufacturing centres.

“When the war ends, the guns remain”, is a common refrain among West Africans. After conflict, small arms are recycled for use in new conflicts and crime at home, or sold to other West African countries for use in new conflicts or to prolong ongoing conflicts. The easy availability of small arms and their circulation within and across borders facilitates the formation of new armed groups and new conflicts; it also facilitates the use of untrained civilian militias, ill-disciplined fighters, and unaccountable mercenaries.

About 40% of SALW are estimated to be in civilian hands, and most countries in West Africa have outdated arms control ordinances and legislation, which date back to the colonial era: Sierra Leone has an arms control ordinance from 1955. For those few countries in a position to enforce gun control legislation, the legislation is often obsolete. Lack of effective legislation and enforcement mechanisms does not just affect the small arms problem in one country, it also affects neighbouring countries: a state with ineffective legislation enables the movement of arms, which can then flow across borders with relative ease.

In fact, SALW seem to know no borders in West Africa. Weapons are circulating at all levels—from the smuggling of individual weapons to large shipments. Recent research assessing the border threat (conducted by the author) noted the patterns of arrival and circulation of small arms within the Mano River Union (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone).<sup>9</sup> Communities interviewed disclosed that during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, particularly AK-47s, RPGs, FM light machine guns, M16 rifles, two-barrel Berettas, pistols, bazookas and mortars, increased along the Koinadugu–Kailahun axis of Sierra Leone. Some of these arms and ammunition are still being trafficked into Sierra Leone from Guinea and Liberia and vice versa. The assessment report identified the Guinea Forest and the Parrot Beak regions as the most prominent routes for trafficking arms within the Mano River Basin. The borders between West Africa’s states are long and full of footpaths, which are poorly patrolled. More than 150 illegal crossing points were identified to and from Sierra Leone and Guinea and Liberia. Over 85% of crossing points were covered by fewer than 11% of the customs, immigration and security officials identified. The Sierra Leone Border Threat Assessment Report established that smuggling of SALW can be a real threat to stability in the Mano River Basin.

In mid-2003, while conflict raged in Liberia, the government of Guinea imported mortar rounds and other ammunition from Iran. These were declared on cargo documents as “detergent” and “technical equipment”.<sup>10</sup> From Guinea, the weapons were forwarded to allied rebels inside Liberia who had just launched two offensives on the capital, Monrovia. The rebels of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy used these weapons to fire indiscriminately on civilian areas of Monrovia.

Just as weapons are recycled from conflict to conflict in West Africa, so too are some of the fighters. There is a thriving trade in mercenaries in West Africa, aiding the circulation and proliferation of small arms in the region. Levels of youth unemployment are high and there are many able-bodied, disgruntled persons available, ready and willing to be trained and armed to fight. As the same ethnic groups live in different states, shared identity can motivate would-be mercenaries further.

The trade in mercenaries is also fuelled by the potential profits to be made in the illicit trafficking of minerals. Large groups of ex-fighters have been attracted to the mineral-rich areas of Sierra Leone and its porous borders, to the potential rewards of illicit mining and criminality. The local oil boom also facilitates proliferation, as rebel groups carry out oil bunkering to arm themselves. Much of West Africa’s mineral wealth is being diverted to aid small arms proliferation in West Africa, and, as is explained below, these arms in turn are ensuring that this diversion of resources persists, to the detriment of development.

### *What is the impact of SALW on West Africa?*

SALW have escalated the intensity and impact of intra-state armed conflicts in West Africa. They are responsible for the majority of direct conflict deaths in West Africa as evident in the civil wars in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and play a central role in the many thousands of indirect conflict deaths caused by loss of access to health services, forced displacement, etc. The plight of refugees must be taken into account: the lost productivity as refugees are forced to live in camps and become dependent on humanitarian aid, and the immeasurable psychological trauma. The civil war in Sierra Leone, where SALW were the main engine of violence, saw some 50,000 people killed, 30,000 had their limbs amputated, and 215,000–257,000 women were victims of sexual violence.<sup>11</sup>

During conflict, the structures of SALW circulation have integrated into economic structures. SALW have an economic value to the fighters that receive them: they enable combatants to engage in predatory violence against civilian populations, stealing goods to sell on the local black market, which is the easily accessible illicit medium of transaction, for personal sustenance and enrichment. In some subregional conflicts, such “bottom-up” war economies have generated a degree of informal cooperation between the combatants of governments and insurgent forces that has sometimes included the trading of SALW. Thus in Sierra Leone, in a new form of cooperative predation, government forces would withdraw from a town, leaving SALW behind. The RUF rebels would take control, collect the arms, and extract cash from the civilian population before retreating. Government forces would then reoccupy the town, looting property that the rebels found more difficult to sell, and engage in illegal mining.<sup>12</sup>

SALW have been called “weapons of mass destruction” in West Africa with good reason. The availability of SALW in West Africa has long-term and widespread pernicious effects. Even when conflicts have been officially terminated, small arms have remained, illicitly, in the post-conflict zones of Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone, making it easy for fighting to recommence. Even when further combat is avoided, the easy availability of small arms means that they have become common tools of violence, used in criminal activities and ethnic and political rivalries. Armed ex-combatants may become affiliated with local gangs, warlords or militias. This enduring climate of violence has often resulted in refugees and displaced persons fearing to return home after a conflict has ended.

The insidious nature and impact of these weapons affects all aspects of society. Small arms, especially firearms, are the primary tools used to kill, threaten and intimidate civilian populations in West Africa. Small arms play a significant role in many abuses, including rape, enforced disappearances, torture, forced displacement and enforced recruitment of child soldiers. When crimes have been committed with machetes, the victims were often initially rounded up with small arms. Heavily armed individuals create an environment in which atrocities can be committed at will and with impunity. Even small numbers of small arms confer great power on those that bear them. It is estimated that more than 50% of the weapons that proliferate in Africa are used illicitly in trafficking, armed robbery, terrorism and organized crime. The proliferation of small arms has also encouraged fear in countries where the state uses small arms to quell political opposition.

In Nigeria, the country's oil-rich Delta State has seen conflict since 2003 involving well-armed militia groups motivated in part by economic interest in stolen crude oil. These groups use a range of sophisticated weapons, such as semi- and fully automatic rifles, alongside more traditional weapons to carry out deadly and paralysing attacks on oil and gas installations. They have killed scores of security officials, damaged oil facilities and infrastructure, and shut down oil production. They have also taken foreign oil workers hostage. Hundreds of people have been killed in the violence, which has also resulted in the displacement of thousands and the destruction of hundreds of properties.



Just as the movement of fighters ready to bear arms aids proliferation, it is a result of small arms proliferation, as their supply creates the demand for people to bear arms. Equally, SALW fuel the illicit trafficking of natural resources such as oil, diamonds, timber and coffee. This is in part due to the porous nature of the borders in West Africa, which exposes the countries to a number of interrelated threats, including smuggling, robbery, dissident activities, rebellion and cross-border raids. All of these are facilitated by the possession and use of small arms. Unless integrated subregional initiatives are taken to address cross-border crimes, the problem will remain a constant threat to border communities.

Therefore, as small arms remain—and proliferate—development is impeded. The impact of SALW on economic well-being and national development in West Africa is of vast significance.<sup>13</sup> Most victims of small arms violence in West Africa are young men, who have the highest earning potential. Non-fatal injuries, which are far more numerous than deaths, involve both costs to productivity and the expenses of health care. These costs must in most cases be met by individuals, households and their communities.

Women's burden of income generation and care giving has increased substantially with the death or injury of so many men. SALW have also placed women and girls at increased risk of severe injury or death. Levels of abuse and domestic violence have increased in post-conflict West African societies, as ex-combatants return home with arms, and these small arms are used to carry out sex crimes.

The presence of small arms creates an atmosphere of fear that affects the resumption of normal economic activity and everyday life. It prevents people from conducting business, leading to reduced trade and foreign investment: small arms violence, be it crime- or conflict-related, has had a particularly significant impact on tourism in West Africa.

It also affects public services: the proliferation of small arms within the subregion has inhibited access to basic services and key infrastructure, such as health clinics, schools and markets. There is a strong correlation between small arms violence and deteriorating public services in the subregion. Government services and aid programmes have to be curtailed or withdrawn because of insecurity. Levels of school enrolment and literacy have declined, as have immunizations, while child and maternal mortality have increased. Over time, this has represented a huge cumulative loss in productivity and wealth.

Over the last decade, the links between SALW proliferation, conflict, security and development have become better recognized and understood within the subregion. It is now accepted that sustainable development is seriously threatened by recurrent violent armed conflict. The proliferation of small arms has erased decades of development and progress; indeed, it has further entrenched poverty within West Africa. The interdependence of small arms control, security and development speaks to the core development mandates of poverty eradication, enhanced human security, inclusion and governance. Communities affected by small arms violence have become socially and economically marginalized. This has all grossly undermined progress toward West Africa meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. It is clear that West Africa desperately needs the rapid ratification and comprehensive implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms.

#### Notes

1. Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in ECOWAS Member States, signed 31 October 1998 at Abuja.
2. ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, signed at Abuja, 14 June 2006. The convention will enter force when it has been ratified by nine member states.
3. Peter Takirambudde, "Liberia: Where the Arms Come from", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 September 2003.

4. N. Florquin and E.G. Berman (eds), 2005, *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, Geneva, Small Arms Survey.
5. "Nigeria: Widespread Availability of Small Arms a Major Security Issue", IRIN, 9 May 2006.
6. *This Day*, 18 February 2003.
7. "'Craft Guns' Fuel West Africa Crime Epidemic", *The Independent*, 8 July 2008.
8. Ibid.
9. F.L. Keili, 2005, *The Sierra Leone Border Threat Assessment Report*, Government of Sierra Leone and UNDP Arms for Development Programme.
10. *Small Arms and Conflict in West Africa*, Testimony of Lisa Nicol, Human Rights Watch Researcher, before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, 20 May 2004, at <[hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/20/africa8680.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/20/africa8680.htm)>.
11. Ploughshares, 2002, *Armed Conflicts Report: Sierra Leone*, at <[www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-SierraLeone.html](http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-SierraLeone.html)>.
12. David Keen, 2001, "Sierra Leone: War and Its Functions", in F. Stewart et al., *War and Underdevelopment. Volume 2: Country Experiences*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 169.
13. For more on the link between poverty and armed violence, see Department for International Development, 2003, *Tackling Poverty by Reducing Armed Violence: Recommendations from a Wilton Park Workshop*.





# Political and institutional dynamics of the control of small arms and light weapons in West Africa

Cyriaque Pawoumotom AGNEKETHOM

Small arms control became a collective endeavour within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the adoption of the Declaration of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa<sup>1</sup> by the Conference of Heads of State and Government in Abuja on 31 October 1998.

Implementing this political framework to combat small arms proliferation<sup>2</sup> very quickly proved to be impossible without adopting joint measures and institutional arrangements for its operationalization and monitoring. The Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium<sup>3</sup> and the decision establishing in each member state a national commission to combat the proliferation of small arms were thus adopted simultaneously in Lomé, Togo, on 10 December 1999. In addition, the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) was developed and carried out between 1999 and 2004 to back up implementation of the moratorium.

The adoption of the Code of Conduct confirms the ECOWAS Commission's role in carrying out, coordinating and monitoring implementation of the subregional small arms control policy. The legal framework reflecting this policy, which is rooted in the "spirit of the moratorium"<sup>4</sup> dating back to the adoption of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials,<sup>5</sup> will enshrine a number of principles and issues at the heart of the current international debate on an arms trade treaty<sup>6</sup> and arms transfer control initiative.

## *Gradual institutionalization*

The establishment of national and subregional institutions to combat the proliferation of small arms has been gradual, and 10 December 1999 may be considered a milestone in that respect. With the adoption on that date of the Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium and Decision A/DEC.13/12/99 establishing national commissions to combat the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms, the ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government prepared the ground for a process of institutionalization that has been consolidated over time.

At the national level, national commissions have been established in member states under article 4 of the Code of Conduct to "promote and ensure coordination of concrete measures for effective implementation of the Moratorium at national level". The functions of these commissions are explained in detail in the 1999 decision, article 3(1) of which provides that national commissions must

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assist the competent national authorities in devising, developing and implementing national policies to combat the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms.

The composition of the national commissions is spelled out more precisely in the 1999 decision than in the Code of Conduct. Whereas the Code of Conduct stipulates that national commissions must be made up of representatives of the relevant authorities and civil society, the 1999 decision limits membership to representatives of the ministries of defence, internal affairs and security, justice, foreign affairs and civil society.

While a few national commissions as yet have no representatives of civil society as members, it is nevertheless acknowledged by all that civil society and non-governmental organizations, which have made small arms a central issue in the political and security debate in the subregion, have a crucial role to play if this scourge is to be addressed efficiently and effectively. On this basis, and in accordance with the recommendations of the ECOWAS Commission, national commissions include representatives of civil society organizations or, in cases where the law has not yet been updated, cooperate closely with them.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations, for their part, are gradually organizing themselves so as to have a greater impact on the national implementation of subregional policy to combat the proliferation of small arms. National coalitions of civil society organizations working in this field have thus been established in various countries under the umbrella of the West Africa Network on Small Arms (WAANSA).<sup>7</sup>

The institutionalization process was slower at the subregional level than at the national level. While civil society and non-governmental organizations quickly established WAANSA in May 2002, the ECOWAS Commission had no organizational unit exclusively for small arms until 2005. Before then, implementation of the moratorium had been monitored by the Legal Department and, to a lesser extent, the Zonal Observation Bureaux (in accordance with article 5 of the Code of Conduct) established within the framework of the early warning system instituted by the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with the decision of the Council of Ministers adopted in 2003 in Accra, Ghana, the Small Arms Unit was established in September 2005 within the ECOWAS Commission to implement, monitor and coordinate ECOWAS policy on the non-proliferation of small arms.

The major concern of ECOWAS was not merely to establish new regional and subregional institutions but rather to ensure that they were functional and had the necessary capacity. Thus, at the same time as the ECOWAS Commission was endeavouring to ensure that members honoured their political commitment to establish operational national commissions, it also launched, with the support of its partners, the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP)<sup>9</sup> in June 2006. This five-year programme, which is based in Bamako, Mali, is intended to build the capacities of national commissions, civil society and the Small Arms Unit to enable these institutions to implement the moratorium effectively and to ensure that they are better equipped to assume their responsibilities and carry out the activities set out in the Convention once it enters into force.

### ***The central role of the ECOWAS Commission***

The political will to control small arms and light weapons within the territory of ECOWAS has been forcefully expressed on many occasions by the Heads of State and Government, as shown by the various aforementioned political and legal decisions that have been adopted. The major challenge remains translating this will into practical action, primary responsibility for which now lies, as in

many areas of community policy, with the ECOWAS Commission, which has replaced the Executive Secretariat.

Under article 5 of the Code of Conduct, the structures, staff and procedures for the implementation of the moratorium must be established within what was then the Executive Secretariat in order to “assist Member States’ implementation of the Moratorium; monitor compliance; and report progress to the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government at regular intervals”.

The transition from the moratorium to the Convention established the ECOWAS Commission as the key body in the implementation of the Community’s policy to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The ECOWAS Commission’s responsibilities are very clearly set out in articles 25 and 28, while its decisive role in the management and monitoring of the procedures for exemption is set out in article 5.

Analysis of the legal texts and practice to date shows that the ECOWAS Commission plays a number of key roles, which are summed up below.

#### SUPPORT AND SUPERVISORY ROLE

Member states have given the ECOWAS Commission responsibility for defining and implementing a policy to gather the resources needed to implement community policy in this area. Within this framework, a strengthened partnership is being developed with a number of countries, institutions and organizations on the specific issue of small arms and light weapons. This technical and financial partnership has made it possible to strengthen the Commission’s institutional framework, with the establishment and operationalization of the Small Arms Unit; to launch ECOSAP, which is intended first and foremost to build the capacities of the national commissions; to negotiate and adopt in record time the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms; and to make progress in the ratification process and the development and adoption of the action plan for the implementation of the Convention.

#### MONITORING AND EVALUATION ROLE

The ECOWAS Commission has an important role to play in ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of the provisions in force, whether this involves implementing the current moratorium or the future Convention. This makes it possible to verify whether the political will expressed by the Heads of State and Government is truly translated into action for the benefit of citizens of the Community. Meetings with the national commissions to combat the proliferation of small arms are therefore organized on a regular basis. The first and second conferences of the national commissions were held under the auspices of ECOSAP in Accra, Ghana, in February 2007 and Cotonou, Benin, in July 2008, in order to take stock of the progress made in carrying out specific activities and to discuss the challenges in carrying them out.

These monitoring and evaluation activities also served as a basis for the evaluation of the implementation of the moratorium in 2002–2003. The evaluation contained a recommendation that a small arms unit should be established and prompted the decision by the Heads of State and Government to transform the moratorium into a convention.

The ECOWAS Commission also evaluated the implementation of the 1999 decision of the Heads of State and Government on the establishment of national commissions by member states, looking into the institutional and functional aspects among other things.

In light of the increasingly important responsibilities given to the national commissions, the evaluation aims to assess the level of institutionalization of these commissions, their performance in

terms of carrying out their activities and the challenges they face, so that better solutions can be found that will enable them to operate more effectively and efficiently.<sup>10</sup>

Under the Convention, the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of the Commission are increased, and the President of the Commission is required to submit an annual report to the Conference of Heads of State and Government on the implementation of the Convention and to appoint a group of independent experts to assist him in monitoring and evaluation activities.<sup>11</sup>

#### COORDINATION ROLE

Numerous actors are increasingly active in the field of small arms in the territory of ECOWAS. While this can be seen as a sign of increased mobilization in combating the scourge of small arms, it is important to ensure not only that this activity is in the interest of the subregion but also that there is no duplication of effort or waste of financial and technical resources.

Against this background, the ECOWAS Commission is increasingly engaged in dialogue with the various actors to ensure that their activities are coordinated. Action by the United Nations system is also being better coordinated, with some programmes and activities being carried out jointly. Similar efforts are being made to coordinate the work of research institutes and training centres in the field of small arms. The gradual institutionalization of relations between the ECOWAS Commission and civil society organizations working on this issue, including their regional networks, is justified by the indispensable role they are known to play, as well as by the concern for coordination to avoid duplication of work.

In addition, the ECOWAS Commission is entrusted with coordinating the implementation of inter-State or subregional activities. This is the case, for example, with the promotion of inter-State cooperation and strengthening of cross-border cooperation in combating the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. The ECOWAS Commission also coordinates the work under way to harmonize the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing small arms and light weapons within the territory of ECOWAS.

#### IMPLEMENTATION ROLE

The handling of procedures for exemption remains the cornerstone of ECOWAS policy and of the entire system put in place to strengthen control of small arms and light weapons in the subregion.

The responsibility for handling exemption procedures was entrusted to the former Executive Secretariat under article 9 of the Code of Conduct for the Implementation of the Moratorium and is now entrusted to the ECOWAS Commission under article 5 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

Drawing on the lessons of a decade of handling exemptions to the moratorium, in June 2008 the ECOWAS Commission initiated and submitted for approval by member states in Lomé, Togo, an exemption request form that standardizes the content and form of requests for exemption submitted by states to the Commission. In addition, a computerized database was set up by the ECOWAS Commission to handle the exemption procedure and consideration is being given to improving security in relation to the exemption certificate issued to member states.

### ***A political vision bolstered by recent international initiatives***

The usual interpretation of the moratorium reduces it to a political commitment to straightforward disarmament in a region affected by recurring armed conflicts. However, while this interpretation is accurate, it is incomplete.

The declaratory nature and excessive duration of the moratorium are better understood if the moratorium is seen as part of a balanced and comprehensive approach to development, aimed at promoting security in order to bring sustainable development to the subregion. This implies applying strict controls to the purchase, possession and use of weapons by authorized institutions while aggressively combating the illicit circulation of those arms.

It thus becomes apparent that the relation between security and development, and the need to control legal use and combat illicit use, constitute the foundation of ECOWAS policy on small arms and light weapons.

***The relation between security and development, and the need to control legal use and combat illicit use, constitute the foundation of ECOWAS policy on small arms and light weapons.***

The basic principle of the moratorium and the Convention with respect to arms transfers is prohibition, with possibilities for exemptions for legitimate security needs, for maintaining order or for conducting peacekeeping operations.

Chapter II of the ECOWAS Convention deals with the transfer of small arms and light weapons, and is sufficiently explicit concerning the will of member states in this area. It clearly sets forth the principle of the prohibition of transfers (article 3) along with conditions of exemption (article 4), and it sets out the procedures for obtaining an exemption certificate (article 5) and the criteria to be used in examining requests for exemption submitted by member states.

More specifically, member states are subject to a ban on transfers of small arms and light weapons, though they may obtain an exemption in certain circumstances if their request for exemption meets a number of criteria, while non-state actors may not benefit from the transfer of arms without the authorization of the importing state. Authorized transfers of arms must be carried out in all transparency and be recorded in the various registers designed for that purpose: the national register; the subregional register maintained by the ECOWAS Commission; and peacekeeping operations registers.

It is clear from the foregoing that ECOWAS leaders believe that efforts to control small arms will not be complete without laying down and enforcing clear principles governing the transfer of arms. The efforts to conclude an arms trade treaty and the initiative to control the transfer of arms are thus international actions liable to strengthen the control of small arms and light weapons in the territory of ECOWAS, provided that the debate under way on these initiatives takes into account certain realities in the subregion.

All ECOWAS members are recipient states, while some are occasionally sellers or suppliers. Any instrument or initiative that focuses on suppliers (exports or subsidies) rather than recipients (imports) would exclude ECOWAS states. Any future obligations and possible control mechanisms must cover export as well as import activities.

The nature of the actor carrying out or benefiting from a transfer is an important consideration in any international initiative on arms transfers if it is not to make a subregion (such as West Africa) even more vulnerable. The experience drawn from the various armed conflicts throughout West Africa shows the decisive role of non-state actors (rebel movements, mercenaries, private security firms and others), which have such easy access to arms.<sup>12</sup> It has become clear that reducing non-state actors' access to arms is an effective means of avoiding armed conflict and instability in the subregion. As the ECOWAS Convention prohibits arms transfers to non-state actors "that are not explicitly authorized



by the importing Member”, any international initiative that contradicts this will not only fail to gain the support of ECOWAS member states but will, moreover, be perceived as a means of making the subregion even more vulnerable.

It is equally important to note that, while the principle of prior authorization for international transfers in the form of a licence, as championed by some countries, may be considered a significant step towards the international control of transfers, it reverses the logic and principles of the moratorium and the ECOWAS Convention.

The content of the moratorium and the Convention itself is based on the principle of banning the import and export of small arms in the territory of ECOWAS while permitting exemptions. The application of the criteria for reviewing requests for exemption submitted by member states may lead to the rejection of a request for transfer, whereas prior authorization in the form of a licence risks making transfers automatic, as exporting states are little concerned with the risks of diversion or the negative impact of their exports on the security and stability of destination areas. At the very least, the principle of prior authorization undermines the ban adopted by ECOWAS member states in light of the security situation in the subregion. If this principle is to be a point of consensus in an arms trade treaty, it must be qualified by review criteria that take into account the situation of the country of destination and, in the case in point, the vulnerability of ECOWAS states and their security situation.

Such criteria could be incorporated in the dialogue between West African recipient countries and potential suppliers, within the framework of support measures aimed at helping West African states to meet their obligations. A dialogue on the implementation of the moratorium was started with manufacturers and suppliers meeting within the framework of the Wassenaar Arrangement.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps any criteria and limitations set out in an arms trade treaty could incorporate elements of the dialogue within the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention.

## Conclusion

The adoption on 14 June 2006 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials translates the political vision of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government concerning small arms control into a legal instrument. This particular, and indeed original, political vision, as contained in the Declaration of a Moratorium, is now justified by the current international initiatives on the control of arms transfers and the proposed principles that should govern such transfers. However, if this policy is to be implemented effectively and efficiently, there will need to be—in addition to the necessary technical and financial resources—adequate and functioning institutional arrangements in place at the national and subregional levels with the capacity to play their role in full. In this respect, the ECOWAS Commission, the cornerstone of this arrangement, must strengthen its own institutional capacities while strongly supporting the institutionalization and operation of the national commissions of member states and the restructuring of civil society organizations working in this field.

## Notes

1. Declaration of a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, in United Nations document A/53/763-S/1998/1194, 18 December 1998.
2. At the time of writing, pending the entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the moratorium still remains the foundation of ECOWAS policy in this area after being renewed for a third time in October 2007.
3. The text of the code is reproduced in J. Seck, 2000, *West Africa Small Arms Moratorium: High-Level Consultations on the Modalities for the Implementation of PCASED*, Geneva and Lomé, UNIDIR and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, <[www.unidir.org/pdf/ouvrages/pdf-1-92-9045-000-1-en.pdf](http://www.unidir.org/pdf/ouvrages/pdf-1-92-9045-000-1-en.pdf)>.

4. That being the prohibition of the manufacture and transfer of arms within a specific time frame with exemptions under specific circumstances.
5. Available on line at the following address: <[www.ecosap.ecowas.int/en/ecosap/strategic\\_docs/convention/convention\\_small\\_arms.pdf](http://www.ecosap.ecowas.int/en/ecosap/strategic_docs/convention/convention_small_arms.pdf)>.
6. See <[www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)> and <[disarmament.un.org/cab/ATT/index.html](http://disarmament.un.org/cab/ATT/index.html)>.
7. To date, national coalitions have been formed in all member states except Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea and Mali.
8. Within the framework of the early warning system, ECOWAS territory is divided into four observation and monitoring zones, the offices of which are responsible for gathering information for the Observation and Monitoring Centre located in Abuja, Nigeria.
9. ECOSAP took over from PCASED, the United Nations programme which had supported ECOWAS in the implementation of the moratorium between 1999 and 2004.
10. The report on this evaluation, jointly conducted by the Small Arms Unit and ECOSAP, will be available toward the end of 2008.
11. See article 28 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.
12. See N. Florquin and E. Berman (eds), 2005, *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva.
13. See <[www.wassenaar.org](http://www.wassenaar.org)>.





## Peace, security and the Millennium Development Goals in West Africa

Anatole Ayissi

Most programmes targeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have a mainly economic thrust.<sup>1</sup> Political aspects in general, and peace and security in particular, are either skirted or completely ignored. Yet experience shows that it is hard for some poor countries to attain the MDGs without addressing the challenges of security and governance. With security and development so closely intertwined, the Millennium Declaration has an entire section on peace, security and disarmament in which, alongside their commitment to overcome poverty and strive for development, the heads of state and government pledge to “spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States”.<sup>2</sup>

Five years on from the Millennium Declaration, at the 2005 World Summit, world leaders again asserted that there can be no sustainable development without peace and security. As they stated in the World Summit Outcome: “peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. We recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.”<sup>3</sup> By way of illustration, the World Bank notes in a recent report that the majority of countries with little chance of attaining the MDGs are those beset by conflict and insecurity:

Looking ahead, the challenge to reach the MDGs will increasingly be concentrated in low-income countries, and especially fragile states ... . On all MDGs, fragile states lag behind other developing countries. This group of countries poses particular development challenges, as many are dealing with conflict or post-conflict environments that make the delivery of development finance and services especially problematic.<sup>4</sup>

This nexus between armed conflict, fragile states and the lack of progress on the MDGs is an emerging regional trend in West Africa. At least half the states in the subregion<sup>5</sup> are either in post-conflict recovery (Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone) or greatly weakened by creeping or endemic crisis situations (e.g. Guinea, Mali, Niger).

The West African states themselves recognize that such situations of conflict or institutional instability impact negatively on their progress toward the MDGs, and post-crisis West African countries are now tending to include peace, security and governance as one of the pillars of their poverty reduction strategies (PRS) and their MDG strategies. Liberia’s PRS has four pillars, the very first of which is “consolidating peace and security”.<sup>6</sup> In Sierra Leone, too, the first pillar of its PRS in pursuit

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of the MDGs is “promoting good governance, security and peace”, followed by promoting inclusive growth and promoting human development.<sup>7</sup>

So, although there is no explicit Millennium Development Goal on security and disarmament issues, the Millennium Declaration is sufficiently clear on the centrality of peace, security and disarmament in the processes of development of fragile states or states affected by armed crises. It is also clear, from the political action being taken in many crisis-affected states in West Africa, that these states see security and peacebuilding as a cross-cutting priority in the attainment of the MDGs. It could hardly be otherwise in a subregion plagued by armed crises for 20 years and where the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) continues to pose a formidable challenge not only to peace and security but also, and increasingly, to economic and social development.

### *The impact of SALW proliferation and armed violence on the MDGs in West Africa*

How do the proliferation of small arms and the spread of armed violence affect progress toward the MDGs in West Africa? How do security and disarmament programmes affect development in the subregion? These are the questions to be answered in the remainder of this paper. The analysis concludes with some suggestions as to the most effective approach to take to the security and development nexus, with particular reference to the MDGs.

The first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1) is to reduce poverty. One of the indicators of progress in this regard is the reduction by half, by 2015, of the proportion of people who suffer from hunger in the world. In West Africa, as indeed in the continent as a whole, efforts to meet this target will require the promotion of agriculture, and Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General, has called for a “green revolution” in Africa. But one of the features common to all West Africa’s conflict zones is the insecurity that grips much of the countryside and rural areas. Major roads, the main routes for transporting agricultural produce to urban centres and markets, are also subject to waves of the insurgent or criminal violence that rack fragile states. The problem of highway bandits—heavily armed criminals who use small arms to extort money from traders and prey upon ordinary people—is a depressing illustration of this.

In terms of the MDGs, armed violence of this kind, whether in the countryside or along the roads, blocks progress because it interferes with agricultural production and the reduction of hunger: the countryside and rural areas where insecurity prevails (for example Casamance in Senegal and many regions of Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone) are deserted and agricultural work has come to a halt. It also makes it difficult to sell agricultural produce, which prevents farmers from increasing their income, thereby putting yet another brake on progress toward poverty reduction. Specialist studies show that, during the civil war in Sierra Leone, for example, “some 500,000 farm families were displaced [and] production of rice (the main staple crop) during the 1991–2000 civil war fell to 20% of pre-war levels”.<sup>8</sup>

According to police data in Liberia, both from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and from the Liberia National Police, rape is now the most prevalent crime in that country, with

**Table 1. Most frequently reported offences, Liberia, March–April 2008**

	<i>Rape</i>	<i>Armed robbery</i>
March 2008	58	44
April 2008	52	55

Source: Compiled by the author from sources in UNMIL-CIVPOL, Monrovia, May 2008.

armed assault a close second. Data obtained by the author from the UNMIL Civilian Police (CIVPOL-UNMIL), for example, yield Table 1 for March and April 2008.

According to this data from the Liberian police and judiciary, many cases of rape occur during armed assault or armed robbery, usually at the victim's residence. Homeowners are attacked in their homes and stripped of their possessions, and the women and girls in the household are then raped at gunpoint. This kind of violence against women—in which the proliferation of SALW is a factor—has an adverse impact on the MDGs in at least two ways: first, it affects MDG 3 (“promote gender equality and empower women”) and efforts to combat violence against women; second, it has a direct impact on food security, which is one of the targets of MDG 1 and a major problem in Liberia today. Women are the backbone of agriculture in Liberia: they account for more than half the agricultural labour force and for more than 60% of the country's agricultural production. The spread of assault and rape in rural areas, which is where farming takes place, forces women to flee to the relative safety of urban centres. Two direct consequences of such terrorization are a slump in agricultural production and increasing poverty among women.

The situations in Liberia and Sierra Leone outlined here are by no means exceptional. Similar situations exist in other countries of the subregion, including Guinea-Bissau and some areas of Côte d'Ivoire.

Given the institutional difficulties faced by individual African states in making the required progress toward the MDGs on their own, cross-border cooperation and regional integration are indispensable, yet the proliferation of armed gangs in border areas prevents just such cooperation and integration. From time to time, criminals succeed in taking control of border areas in West Africa, jeopardizing any chance of continuing economic cooperation or sustainable development there. This is the case in parts of the Mano River Basin, for example, where there are large areas of lawlessness along the borders of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A similar fate threatens the borders between Mali and Niger, and between Senegal and Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

### *The impact of security programmes on development in West Africa*

To overcome these challenges, numerous programmes have been put in place to address security and promote development in the subregion, usually with support from governmental and non-governmental development partners. Generally speaking, security and peacebuilding programmes have a beneficial effect on states and the subregion.

In Sierra Leone, “arms for development” programmes have helped improve security, especially in rural areas, once the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants has officially ended. It is well known that official DDR programmes can by no means collect and destroy all the weapons that enter a country during conflict, and arms for development projects are thus an excellent complement to DDR. Arms for development campaigns are more effective when undertaken in the communities themselves, especially in rural areas. Local engagement in getting rid of SALW in return for social projects improves safety within and around the community and promotes economic and social development.

This point is well illustrated by the Ribbi chiefdom in the Moyamba district of Sierra Leone. During the civil war in Sierra Leone, rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) made a village in the chiefdom their regional headquarters, with the result that the social and economic infrastructure was totally destroyed, children were recruited into combat units and the rest of the population, mainly women, fled into the bush. After the war, the area saw one of the highest small arms proliferation rates in the country. An arms for development project was launched with the support of development partners such as the United Nations Development Programme and local communities. The project

has enabled the community to eliminate SALW, and in return it has received US\$ 20,000, which has been used to build a school and a health centre.

According to local people, the building of the new school has increased school enrolment, parents being more willing to send their children to a new, safer school. The health centre, too, has improved primary health care for local people. These results have thus boosted progress toward the MDGs, particularly those related to poverty and famine eradication (MDG 1), universal access to primary education (MDG 2), and health care (MDGs 4, 5 and 6).<sup>9</sup>

Sierra Leone is not the only country in West Africa where efforts to halt SALW proliferation are helping progress toward the MDGs. It is becoming clear that disarmament efforts in several other countries in the subregion, including Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Senegal, are a catalyst for progress in several sectors directly or indirectly related to the MDGs (poverty eradication, the protection of women, the promotion of agriculture and so on).

Arms for development programmes work provided certain conditions are met. These include:

- close cooperation between all actors and stakeholders in the process: state, civil society, ex-combatants, local communities, community leaders, development partners, etc.;
- ownership of the process by the local communities, with a major role for youth, women and traditional leaders;
- significant support from non-governmental organizations, mainly local ones;
- funding must be in place and guaranteed over the long term; and
- incorporation of the programme into a broader national process of post-crisis and post-conflict peacebuilding.

### ***New phase in efforts to address regional insecurity and SALW proliferation, and to promote development in West Africa***

The Millennium Declaration and the pledges on MDGs coincided with West Africa's adoption of a new philosophy of regional integration based on four pillars: consolidating regional integration, in particular cross-border cooperation; promoting sustainable development; peacebuilding and combating insecurity; and promoting good governance and the rule of law.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of legal instruments and political strategy, this new framework for partnership between member states of ECOWAS has resulted in:

- the amendment of the ECOWAS Charter to take the new requirements for integration into account;
- the adoption of new peacebuilding and security instruments, including a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security and a Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons;
- the adoption of a Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; and
- the reorganization of the ECOWAS Secretariat.

The new framework for partnership is intended to speed up progress toward the dual goal of security and development. There are two guiding principles, which may be termed the principle of regional integration and the principle of sectoral integration. In other words, security and development efforts, including endeavours to attain the MDGs, must be integrated in a coherent regional framework that places special emphasis on cross-border dynamics. Thus ECOWAS is currently preparing its first ever regional report on the MDGs. It will review progress at the regional level, what remains to be done and, most important, what new dynamics need to be activated in order to achieve the MDGs in

an efficient, consistent and mutually supportive fashion. In terms of peacebuilding and security, and efforts to curb the spread of SALW in particular, regional initiatives are driven by the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) within the legal framework of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

But the threats to peace and security in the subregion are changing, and this is one of the major challenges West Africa faces in its efforts to achieve the twin objectives of security and the MDGs. A new generation of threats is emerging, which is giving rise to a range of compound challenges that the subregion is as yet ill equipped to deal with. For example, West Africa is increasingly cited as one of the hubs of hard drug (cocaine) trafficking from Latin America to Europe, and this has several consequences relating both to small arms proliferation and to the MDGs. The criminal gangs that control illicit drug trafficking are causing a new wave of small arms proliferation in West Africa, and there are countries, Guinea-Bissau for example, where these gangs will soon have taken over some areas, making them dangerous for agriculture (MDG 1).<sup>11</sup> Already weak states are being further weakened by the trade in illicit narcotics (and by corruption in particular), making them less able not only to promote the MDGs at the national level but also to work effectively toward regional integration strategies.

*But the threats to peace and security in the subregion are changing, and this is one of the major challenges West Africa faces in its efforts to achieve the twin objectives of security and the MDGs.*

## Conclusion

The MDGs represent a dual contract of trust and performance between poor countries and the international community. The idea underlying this contract is “we pay, you deliver”, “we” being the international community and development partners and “you” being the poor and developing countries. In other words, by adopting the MDGs, the rich countries have pledged to provide funding and poor countries have pledged to “deliver” development, including the conditions for that development and for the sustainability of development, namely peace, security and good governance. As with any contract, success is guaranteed only if each partner keeps its word. The ideal conditions for success are still by no means in place, not only in West Africa but in general.

In terms of the pledges from the development partners’ side, we are still waiting for those promises to bear fruit, as the report of the Blair Commission for Africa, inter alia, pointed out.<sup>12</sup> On the West African side, the dream of peace and security, the commitment to good governance and the rule of law, and the pledges to fight corruption and waste are far from being a universal reality. Not only are there failures at several levels but, more worryingly, significant ground has been lost.

Even so, there is still hope that the parties concerned can make up for lost time (with regard to the 2015 deadline) and keep their word. While it is recognized that this part of the continent continues to face “a myriad of challenges which impede its ability to attain the Millennium Development Goals”,<sup>13</sup> West African countries prepared with great seriousness and determination for the High-Level Event on the MDGs on 25 September 2008 at the United Nations.<sup>14</sup> Such commitment, supported by the necessary resources, will be essential if West Africa is to achieve the MDG by 2015. Poverty eradication has become a key component of economic growth policies, and in terms of strategic planning and strengthening of regional integration, policy makers’ conferences, including ECOWAS summits and ministerial meetings of various kinds, are tending more and more to look at questions of development and economic recovery in tandem with the issue of progress—or stagnation or regression—on the MDGs. A recent extraordinary meeting of ECOWAS finance, agriculture and trade ministers, held in May 2008, is a case in point: ministers developed a strategy to combat food insecurity, with emergency and long-range measures to back up regional initiatives under MDG 1.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, West African heads of state and government devoted their summit on 23 June 2008 in Abuja, Nigeria, to food security



and poverty eradication. The ECOWAS spokesperson said the subregion's leaders had convened the summit because increasing poverty was "posing threats to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015". At this important meeting, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, submitted to the heads of state a report on the status of implementation of regional programmes.<sup>16</sup> These programmes are vital to progress toward the MDGs because they address conflict prevention and peacebuilding, poverty eradication and natural disasters, and harmonization of policies on investment, economic growth and development at the subregional level.

## Notes

1. The Millennium Development Goals are: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development. For more information, go to <[www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)>.
2. United Nations Millennium Declaration, UN General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, UN document A/RES/55/2, 18 September 2000, paragraph 8.
3. 2005 World Summit Outcome, UN General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005, UN document A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, paragraph 9.
4. World Bank, 2008, *Global Monitoring Report 2008: MDGs and the Environment, Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*, Washington, DC, p. 22, <[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGLOMONREP2008/Resources/4737994-1207342962709/8944\\_Web\\_PDF.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGLOMONREP2008/Resources/4737994-1207342962709/8944_Web_PDF.pdf)>.
5. West Africa here means the area covered by the member states of the Economic Community of West African States, i.e., Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, plus Mauritania.
6. The other three pillars are, in order, "revitalizing the economy", "strengthening governance and the rule of law" and "rehabilitating infrastructure and delivering basic services". For details see International Monetary Fund and Republic of Liberia, 2008, *Liberia: Poverty Reduction Strategy*, IMF Country Report no. 08/219, at <[www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08219.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08219.pdf)>.
7. International Monetary Fund and Government of Sierra Leone, 2005, *Sierra Leone: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, IMF Country Report no. 05/191, at <[www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2005/cr05191.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2005/cr05191.pdf)>. This PRS covers 2005 to 2007; the new strategy, with the same priorities, is in the pipeline.
8. United Nations Development Programme, 2005, *Human Development Report 2005: International Cooperation at a Crossroads—Aid, Trade and Security in an Unequal World*, New York, p. 159.
9. "Choosing Development over Guns in Sierra Leone", UNDP, 1 December 2004 (originally published in *Choices* magazine, December 2004).
10. See A. Ayissi (ed.), 2001, *Cooperating for Peace in West Africa: An Agenda for the 21st Century*, Geneva, UNIDIR.
11. See Grant Ferret, 2007, "The Cocaine Warehouse", *World Agenda: The BBC's International Journal*.
12. Commission for Africa, 2005, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa*; Michael Abramowitz, "Panel Urges G-8 to Increase Africa Aid", *Washington Post*, 16 June 2008. See also the Africa Progress Panel, at <[www.africanprogresspanel.org/english/newsreleases.php](http://www.africanprogresspanel.org/english/newsreleases.php)>, and The African Leadership and Progress Network, at <[www.africanprogress.net/africa\\_G8.htm](http://www.africanprogress.net/africa_G8.htm)>.
13. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, President of the ECOWAS Commission, quoted in "ECOWAS—Niger Delta Crisis, Threat to Regional Security", *This Day*, 20 May 2008.
14. On the Summit, see United Nations General Assembly, "High-level event on the Millennium Development Goals: 25 September 2008—Committing to action: achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Background note by the Secretary-General", 25 July 2008, <[www.un.org/ga/president/62/issues/mdg/backgroundmdg\\_sg.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/issues/mdg/backgroundmdg_sg.pdf)>; regarding more specifically Africa, see "High Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward, 22 September 2008, Summary Report", at <[www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/adn/crimeimpedimentsd.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/adn/crimeimpedimentsd.pdf)>.
15. Final Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade, Finance and Agriculture held at Abuja, 19 May 2008.
16. See "Yar'Adua, ECOWAS Leaders Meet Today over High Food, Oil Prices", *Daily Trust*, 23 June 2008.

# The role of civil society in conflict prevention: West African experiences

Thelma EKIYOR

Civil society's visibility and influence in conflict prevention and peacebuilding has grown globally. Civil society actors have increasingly become vital forces in discourses, initiatives and programmes that foster peace and security across the world. Specifically, civil society has been instrumental in the reconceptualization of security from a "state-centred" process to one that is "people centred". This focus on people-centred security emanates from the belief that fundamentally the sustainable security of states can only be attained through the security of its people. This belief is shared in regions across the world that have experienced open conflicts and civil wars, which have ravaged communities and brought devastation to the lives of ordinary people.

West Africa has witnessed a number of protracted civil wars and intra-state conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in millions of deaths, the displacement of communities, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and the stagnation of growth and development in the region. The nature of these conflicts exposes and draws in local populations: West African conflicts are intricate, multifaceted and multi-party, and as a result it is impossible for state actors to prevent, manage or resolve them without the assistance and involvement of non-state actors.

Civil society in particular has been at the forefront of promoting localized peacebuilding initiatives, initiating reconciliation processes, advocating for adherence to peace agreements and building capacities in peace education. In spite of playing such laudable roles, however, civil society still faces a number of challenges, ranging from poor organization among actors within the sector, poor funding for activities, governments' mistrust and the often antagonistic interaction between civil society and government. This article examines the various contributions civil society organizations (CSOs) have made to conflict prevention in West Africa.

## *What is civil society?*

Defining civil society and identifying which organizations fall within the framework of civil society continues to be a challenge. The difficulty of conceptualizing civil society in West Africa is that there is a tendency to focus on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), excluding groups and associations that reflect West Africa's associational culture, e.g. traditional governance structures.

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union defines civil society as comprising social groups; professional groups; NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), voluntary organizations; and cultural organizations, among other segments in which women, youth,

children, national diasporas and elements of the private sector such as market women's associations and the media are listed.<sup>1</sup>

Civil society has also been described as the arena outside the family, the state and the market, where people associate to advance common interests.<sup>2</sup> The notion of an arena where people associate to advance common interests has strong resonance in West Africa as it enables the definition of civil society to include formal and informal groupings such as traditional chiefs, Queen Mother associations, youth movements, market women, religious groups and the media.

### ***What is conflict prevention?***

Analogous to civil society, conflict prevention presents definitional challenges. It remains an ambiguous concept that has transformed over time. The former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described conflict prevention as preventive diplomacy, an "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and limit the spread of the latter when they occur".<sup>3</sup>

In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) defines conflict prevention as:

activities designed to reduce tensions and prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread or recurrence of violence. Conflict prevention strategies may distinguish between *operational prevention* (measures applicable in the face of imminent crisis) and *structural prevention* (measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do not re-occur). The emphasis is not on preventing conflict per se (conflict being a natural consequence of change) but in halting its descent into violence.<sup>4</sup>

Civil society's involvement in conflict prevention in the region corresponds with this definition; it has contributed to structural and operational prevention in a variety of ways.

### ***Civil society and conflict prevention***

CSOs in Africa have a strong history of being at the forefront of movements that dislodged entrenched authoritarianism to introduce democratic governance on the African continent. In West Africa, civil society, through trade and student unions, women's groups and professional associations, was active in the struggles for independence. As the political context in different West African countries evolved from the post-independence era to military and autocratic rule, to current endeavours to build democratic states, the role of civil society also evolved. CSOs across West Africa have been important catalysts for ending military dictatorship, advocating for pluralist and open societies, and promulgating democratization and good governance.

Civil society actors have also filled a vital role as primary providers of basic social services in war-torn societies where viable public institutions and state apparatus are non-existent or considerably weakened. In these anarchical environments, CSOs have become important actors in the processes of mitigating conflict and building peace. It has to be acknowledged, however, that civil society is not a homogeneous group, therefore it cannot be said that all CSOs are by definition peacebuilders. In countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone, some CSOs have been accused of aligning themselves with warring factions and assuming political positions in the conflict. However, this does not diminish the positive contributions other CSOs have made in promoting peace and preventing conflict. In both latent and open conflict situations, civil society has been key in addressing socio-economic disparities in society; assisting with humanitarian relief; promoting human and



women's rights; and contributing toward strengthening government organs like the judiciary and the security sector. Furthermore, civil society's proximity to local populations has also made it critical to mediation, reconciliation and other community peacebuilding initiatives.

### *Practical contributions of civil society to preventing conflict*

Civil society in West Africa has played key roles in preventing violent conflict in a number of ways. These include being involved in early warning and response, advocating against the proliferation of small arms, ensuring that peace processes yield inclusive agreements, contributing toward post-conflict reconstruction, and promoting the involvement of women in peacebuilding.

Central to successful peacebuilding is local ownership and the engagement of local actors in the development and implementation of peacebuilding strategies. CSOs represent important resources of local knowledge and expertise and are uniquely equipped to mobilize individuals in peacebuilding activities. In many instances, CBOs drive community harmonization and assist in rebuilding relationships in post-conflict situations.

It is difficult to capture in this article the entirety of CSOs' contributions to conflict prevention in West Africa. However, the following practical examples of CSOs' interventions in conflict will provide an insight into the extent of their input, both formal and informal.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY AND EARLY WARNING

Conflict early warning and response has been described as the sine qua non of conflict prevention. It consists of the systematic collection and analysis of information coming from areas of crisis for the purposes of anticipating the escalation of violent conflict, developing strategic responses to crises, and the presentation of options to critical actors for decision-making.

The development of early warning systems has gained popularity across Africa, and the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities are all at different stages of developing institutionalized systems. In West Africa, CSOs have played pivotal roles in the development of the region's framework for conflict early and response. For example, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) has been instrumental in "on the ground" conflict monitoring as part of the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN). ECOWAS realized that it lacked the institutional and technical capacity to implement an early warning system, which was a central component of its conflict prevention mechanism. WANEP capitalized on this opportunity to fill the vacuum by utilizing its networks to develop a grass-roots early warning system that passes information to the ECOWAS mechanism. This grass-roots network is the critical web that feeds into four zonal bureaus and the Observation and Monitoring Centre at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria. Through WANEP, civil society is thus involved in filtering, monitoring and analysing conflict information at the community and national levels.

This experience of collaboration between WANEP and ECOWAS has been highlighted as a best practice of how to build alliances with civil society in operationalizing early warning systems and is being examined by other subregions in Africa that are in the preliminary stages of developing early warning systems, such as the Economic Community of Central African States.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY AND SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

The scale of the proliferation of SALW in West Africa is a major security concern. It is estimated that of the 639 million SALW circulating globally, 7 million are in West Africa.<sup>5</sup> Small arms are easily available

in the region and with the intermittent eruptions of conflict, the local arms manufacturing industry is thriving.

This dire situation has led many CSOs in the region to focus their energies on advocating against the proliferation of arms. The collective advocacy efforts of CSOs through initiatives like the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) have yielded constructive outcomes in the region. For example, CSOs were at the forefront of the process calling for an ECOWAS convention on SALW. On 14 June 2006, the Conference of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government signed the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. (This convention was pre-dated by the Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in ECOWAS member states, which was signed on 31 October 1998.)<sup>6</sup>

CSOs also work at the national level to raise awareness of the dangers of arms production, and the ease with which arms can be smuggled across porous national borders. In Ghana, the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) has gone further by donating metal detectors to the Ghana Police Service in the Northern Region to help track down illicit arms and ammunitions. In Senegal, civil society has been particularly active in the fight against the SALW proliferation. The Mouvement contre les Armes Légères (MALAO) is one of the main organizations that focuses on communication and awareness-raising strategies, education and research. MALAO also works in

***There can be no doubt that the level of awareness and the success in policy change on SALW in West Africa is attributable to civil society.***

partnership with the Senegalese National Commission (responsible for controlling the proliferation of small arms) and has initiated numerous sensitization, lobbying and training activities.

There can be no doubt that the level of awareness and the success in policy change on SALW in West Africa is attributable to civil society. Advocacy in this area continues, but already the indelible contribution of

CSOs in bringing this security challenge to the public domain has ensured that policy makers will not ignore the present and future dangers of the spread and proliferation of arms.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE TALKS

The inclusion of civil society in peace processes in West Africa has evolved with each process. Delegates and participants at peace processes in the 1990s were limited to warring factions and political parties, with international observers and representatives of intergovernmental organizations such as ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations.

However, the protracted nature of the civil conflicts in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone meant that peace talks came to represent desperate opportunities to bring stability to countries. The inability of the warring factions to reach sustainable and implementable agreements, for example the failures of the Abidjan Peace Accord of 1996 and the Conakry Peace Plan of 1997 (both on Sierra Leone) led many civil society actors to inject themselves into subsequent talks. Civil society actors argued that the voices and needs of ordinary citizens needed to be heard and discussed at the peace table. CSOs' expertise, skills and capacities were useful in creating the right conditions for talks, building confidence between parties, shaping the conduct and content of negotiations, and influencing the sustainability of peace agreements. Groups like the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia and of Sierra Leone, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) have been critical to ensuring that warring factions come to the negotiating table and that the agreements reached reflect the needs of the people. During the actual peace talks, these CSOs have engaged in behind-the-scenes diplomacy, urging compromise and in many cases building trust between the parties. After peace agreements have been signed, CSOs have

played a public service role by educating citizens in the terms of the agreement and in strategies for holding leaders accountable.

The success of civil society's involvement in these peace talks stresses that peace processes are not purely political and military endeavours. CSOs' ability to influence the talks and their outcomes buttresses the argument that the needs, aspirations and concerns of people directly affected by the violence are integral to the negotiation process.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

When the conflict is over, civil society still plays important roles, and CSOs are often a strong factor in ensuring peaceful transitions to democratically elected governments. Specialized CSOs have the capacity to promote reconciliation, enhance local ownership of peacebuilding initiatives and contribute toward democratization processes. Civil society has been pivotal to the transitional justice processes that have occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone. CSOs played crucial roles in establishing Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) in both countries and were key to retributive justice proceedings in the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

In Sierra Leone and now Liberia, civil society was and is instrumental in raising awareness of the TRCs, keeping the public updated on proceedings, documenting experiences and exposing any deficiencies in the process such as inadequate procedures for taking statements, lack of initiatives to protect witnesses testifying about rape and similar crimes, and low levels of citizen representation in the process. In the case of Sierra Leone, CSOs are leading the calls for implementation of the TRC recommendations.

Civil society is also actively involved in initiatives to reform the security sector in these countries. It can also be credited with assisting with socio-economic recovery programmes such as poverty reduction strategies, youth employment and women's microfinance projects, which are crucial to rebuilding economies decimated by the wars.

#### WOMEN'S ROLE IN CONFLICT PREVENTION

Finally, the impact of wars on women both as victims and perpetrators has meant that the tactics of women as peacebuilders have also had to change, from holding less visible roles to assuming more strategic and influential roles. As West African states became militarized, women became less relevant in formal peacebuilding. Peacebuilding initiatives were designed by men, making the role of women in promoting peace unclear and uncertain. However, at the peak of the violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early 1990s, grass-roots women's groups worked through local associations, faith-based groups and guilds to protect their families and communities. They formed efficient networks to spread information of attacks and safe routes, thus saving lives and reducing the impact of the violence. Many used information provided by family members who had joined rebel movements to protect their communities. At the national level, groups like the Liberian Women's Initiative and the Campaign for Good Governance in Sierra Leone began advocating women's involvement at all levels of peacebuilding.

Clearly, women wanted their voices to be heard and to make their mark. In 2000, MARWOPNET—a joint peace initiative of women ministers and parliamentarians, journalists, lawyers, academics, researchers and individuals from the private sector of the Mano River region (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone)—prevented hostilities re-erupting among the three countries by bringing their leaders back to the negotiating table. These initial advances have inspired the formation of wider women's networks such as WIPNET and women's peace advocacy campaigns such as the Liberian Women's

Mass Action for Peace, which was heralded as being a central player in restoring peace to Liberia in 2003.

These groups and others like them have contributed to changing the stereotypes of women from the vulnerable and “protected” sector in conflict situations to credible actors in peacemaking. This shift has led to key advancements in women’s participation in peace processes. For example, women were observers in the Sierra Leonean peace talks in Lomé. In Liberia, Ruth Sando Perry became Chairwoman of the transitional government, the Council of State (1996–1997). These achievements have been cited as the reason for the increase in the numbers of women in decision-making positions in post-conflict societies.

## ECOWAS AND CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

Cognizant of the need to prevent violent conflicts both nationally and regionally, on 10 December 1999 ECOWAS unanimously established the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.<sup>7</sup> Two years later the heads of state signed a supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to foster participatory democracy, good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and a balanced and equitable distribution of national resources.<sup>8</sup> The Mechanism (as it is otherwise known) and its supplementary protocol provide a comprehensive framework for conflict prevention, peace and security in West Africa. More recently, in January 2008, the ECOWAS heads of state and government adopted a Conflict Prevention Framework, which attempts to address structural and operational conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and provides guidelines and entry points for actors to engage in prevention initiatives.

Civil society has been working closely with ECOWAS in implementing these instruments. Notable examples include the Centre for Democracy and Development, WANEP, FOSDA and the West African Women’s Association (WAWA), which work with ECOWAS on issues of governance, early warning, small arms proliferation and gender, respectively.

Aside from these specialized concerns, civil society in West Africa has formulated a structure for formalized engagement with ECOWAS in areas that promote structural prevention of conflict, e.g. good governance, election observation and stopping corruption. This is the role that the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) plays. WACSOF’s formation as an institutionalized platform for civil society to interact and contribute to policy processes was visionary and pointed to a desire on the part of ECOWAS to develop a more collaborative relationship with civil society.

ECOWAS’s collaboration with these organizations demonstrates the importance of strategic partnerships between civil society and governments. In this regard, the role of civil society has gone beyond the traditional activities of monitoring and policing governments to that of providing a credible bridge between policy makers and their constituencies. The positive results emanating from such healthy relationships should not be confined to the West African subregion, but should serve as examples of best practice for the rest of the continent.

### *Challenges facing civil society in West Africa*

As outlined above, civil society plays a pivotal role in conflict prevention. Nevertheless, there are a number of persisting challenges facing civil society in West Africa.

- *State–civil society relations*: though there has been a significant shift at the level of the ECOWAS Commission on conflict prevention and the importance of including civil society in structural and operational prevention, at the national level, most states in West Africa

still view issues of conflict prevention as being within the realm of state security. This viewpoint means that civil society's formalized prevention activities are often unwelcome or undermined. Furthermore, many governments in West Africa are suspicious of civil society and see its activities as being tantamount to opposition. CSOs' ability to mobilize funds from foreign governments and donors also means they can be direct rivals to states in the competition for resources.

- *Narrow focus on NGOs:* the growth of NGOs within civil society has resulted in the tendency for NGOs to be seen as representing CSOs in general. This narrow categorization of civil society often sidelines the contributions of important actors such as CBOs and traditional rulers.
- *Weak and underfunded coordination mechanisms:* there is weak collaboration among civil society. While there are networks and umbrella organizations functional in the region, competition over donor funding among network members fosters adversarial relationships rather than cooperation and sharing of information. This results in duplication of efforts and initiatives.
- *Limited conflict prevention skills:* though there has been an impressive increase in the number of conflict prevention and peacebuilding practitioners in the region, there is still a shortage of skilled human resources. CSOs can—and do—intervene in conflict situations without the requisite skills, worsening tensions.
- *Lack of policy influence:* though a number of CSOs in the region are involved in exemplary initiatives, the extent to which these initiatives inform or influence conflict prevention policy is intangible and in many cases not measured. Due to limited resources, most CSO activities are ad hoc and not strategically aimed at influencing policy.
- *Lack of documentation:* the contribution of civil society to conflict prevention remains largely unknown due to the absence of a documentation culture among CSOs. CSOs are mainly activity driven and rarely take time to reflect and document their achievements and challenges.

## Conclusion

The above experiences illustrate the important roles civil society plays in conflict prevention in West Africa. Though this not an exhaustive list, it provides a snapshot of the diversity and breadth of civil society's involvement.

A recent regional directory of civil CSOs developed by the West Africa Civil Society Institute lists over 3,000 organizations, associations and groups working within the civil society sector at different levels in the region. Organizations work on various aspects of conflict prevention including human rights, civic education, conflict resolution, promoting dialogue, security sector reform, conflict-sensitive development, election monitoring, policy monitoring and advocacy, gender equality, post-conflict reconstruction efforts (working with refugees, internally displaced persons, or on the disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants), etc. Though a number of CSOs have been involved in formal conflict prevention initiatives, such as those illustrated above, a larger number remain underutilized in activities carried out by ECOWAS and national governments. The recently adopted ECPF aims to bridge this gap, by calling for civil society to be "bona fide partners to bear principal responsibility" in the implementation of the framework.<sup>9</sup>

It is important that national governments domesticate the ECPF and in particular its calls for civil society's involvement in conflict prevention. Efforts by governments to establish institutionalized conflict prevention frameworks and to implement structural and operational prevention initiatives



should incorporate CSOs working at community, national and regional levels as partners. The future of effective conflict prevention hinges on the success of such partnerships. It is important that governments and civil society view themselves as complementary collaborators, showing appreciation for the roles both sectors play and the contributions they make.

However, as the challenges above outline, the civil society sector itself needs to be strengthened.

More emphasis needs to be placed on organizing the sector, making it more professional. Training and knowledge generation on all aspects of conflict prevention should be enhanced. CSOs should incorporate reflection and documentation into their core activities. A functional and effective civil society sector will be essential to West Africa's attempts to consolidate peace and democratization.

#### Notes

1. See ECOSOCC's web site, at <[www.africa-union.org/ECOSOC/home.htm](http://www.africa-union.org/ECOSOC/home.htm)>
2. See Nkwachukwu Orji, 2003, 'Conventional' Notion of Civil Society, *International Civil Society Organisations and the Development of Civil Society in Africa*, Ebonyi State University Press, at <[www.gdnet.org/fulltext/orji.pdf](http://www.gdnet.org/fulltext/orji.pdf)>.
3. *An Agenda for Peace : Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, UN document A/47/277—S/24111, 17 June 1992, paragraph 20.
4. See paragraph 18, ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). The ECPF was enacted by Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08 of the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS on 16 January 2008.
5. Adedeji Ebo and Laura Mazal, 2003, *Small Arms Control in West Africa*, West Africa Series no. 1 , p. 10.
6. For more details on these documents, see the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme web site, at <[www.ecosap.ecowas.int](http://www.ecosap.ecowas.int)>.
7. Signed at Lomé, available at <[www.sec.ecowas.int/sitecedea0/english/ap101299.htm](http://www.sec.ecowas.int/sitecedea0/english/ap101299.htm)>.
8. Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, signed at Dakar, 21 December 2001.
9. ECPF, op. cit., paragraph 114 (a-c).

## Text of The ECOWAS Convention

In this issue of Disarmament Forum dealing with small arms and light weapons in West Africa and actions taken at different levels, we thought it important to provide our readers with the complete text of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. It builds on the Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in ECOWAS Member States signed in Abuja on 31 October 1998 by the ECOWAS Heads of State, and resulted from the initiative of then Head of State of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré, who was concerned by the situation in the region.

Following a process involving the United Nations and local civil society, through the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), the ECOWAS Convention was signed in June 2006. By 26 November 2008, it had been ratified by seven countries (Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo). Once entered into force, the Convention will be a legally binding instrument for peace and security in West Africa.

The following is the official English text of the Convention, which is available at <[www.ecosap.ecowas.int/en/ecosap/strategic\\_docs/convention/convention\\_small\\_arms.pdf](http://www.ecosap.ecowas.int/en/ecosap/strategic_docs/convention/convention_small_arms.pdf)>.

### ***ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials***

#### ***PREAMBLE***

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);

Mindful of Articles 7, 8, and 9 of ECOWAS Revised Treaty relating to the creation, composition and function of the Conference of Heads of State and Government:

MINDFUL of Article 58 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty relating to Regional Security which stipulates that Member States undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region and to establish and strengthen appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of conflicts;

MINDFUL of Article 77 of the Treaty relating to sanctions applicable in cases where a Member State fails to fulfil its obligations to the Community;

MINDFUL of the relevant provisions of the Protocol on the Community Court of Justice adopted on 16 July 1991, the ECOWAS conventions on mutual legal assistance and extradition, signed respectively in Dakar on 29 July 1992 and Abuja on 6 August 1994;

MINDFUL of the Protocol on Non-aggression signed in Lagos on 22 April 1978 and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence Matters signed in Freetown on 29 May 1981, and more particularly our determination to provide mutual assistance in defence matters in the event of armed aggression or threat of aggression against a Member State;

RECALLING the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principle that States shall have the right to defend themselves both individually and collectively, the principle of non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs of another State, and the principle that each Member shall avoid recourse to the threat or use of force;

RECALLING also the relevant provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, including the decision by the Executive Council of the African Union requesting the African Union Commission to take necessary measures to establish a legal instrument to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in Africa;

RECALLING equally the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security signed in Lome on 10 December 1999, particularly Articles 3, 50 and 51 relating to the control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and illegal circulation of such arms;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT resolutions of the United Nations Security Council imposing arms embargoes on countries in the West African sub-region;

ALSO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Bamako Declaration of 1st December 2000 on the common African position on the proliferation, circulation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons;

EQUALLY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT other international, regional and sub-regional initiatives aimed at curtailing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the decision relating to the common African position on the review of the United Nations programme of action on small arms and light weapons adopted in Khartoum in January 2006;

CONSIDERING that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons constitutes a major destabilising factor in ECOWAS Member States and poses a serious threat to the peace and stability of our peoples;

DEEPLY CONCERNED about the uncontrolled flow of small arms and light weapons into Africa in general and West Africa in particular, and aware of the need to effectively control the transfer of arms by suppliers and arms brokers;

AWARE of the need to build peace and prevent conflicts in West Africa, and the disastrous consequences the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has on the prolongation of armed conflicts and illegal exploitation of natural resources;

AWARE OF THE NEED to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacture and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons, trafficking, detention and use of such arms, which have been seen to have negative effects on the security of each country in the sub-region, human security, international humanitarian law, sustainable development, and human rights;

DETERMINED to achieve the objectives outlined in the Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in ECOWAS Member States signed in Abuja on 31 October 1998 and in the Code of Conduct for the implementation of the Moratorium adopted in Lome on 10 December 1999;



DETERMINED ALSO to consolidate the gains of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons and its Code of Conduct, and to take into account the shortcomings observed, with a view to taking corrective measures;

RECOGNISING in this regard the progress achieved in the implementation of the Moratorium, thanks to contributions by the Plan of Action of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED);

CONSCIOUS of the need to strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat in order to enable fight more effectively against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, with a view to obtaining the desired results;

CONSIDERING the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted in 2001;

CONSIDERING the United Nations international instrument adopted in 2005 which seeks to enable States to identify and rapidly trace small arms and light weapons, and the UN Protocol on the manufacture and illicit trade in fire arms, spare parts, components and ammunition adopted in 2001;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT Security Council Resolution 1325 (2002) on women, peace and security which recognises the specific role of women in peace building;

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the use of children in armed conflicts, and taking account of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflicts;

RECOGNISING the important contribution of civil society organisations in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons;

BEARING IN MIND the Final Communiqué issued at the end of the Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held in Dakar on 30 January 2003 which directed the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat to examine the possibility of transforming the Moratorium into a Convention;

HEREBY AGREE AS FOLLOWS

## **CHAPTER I** **DEFINITIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

### ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Convention:

1. **LIGHT WEAPONS:** Portable arms designed to be used by several persons working together in a team and which include notably:

- heavy machine guns;
- portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted;
- portable anti-aircraft cannons;
- portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns;
- portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers;
- portable anti-aircraft missile launchers;
- mortars with a calibre of less than 100 millimetres;

2. **SMALL ARMS:** Arms used by one person and which include notably:

- firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or landmine;
- revolvers and pistols with automatic loading;
- rifles and carbines;
- machine guns;
- assault rifles;
- light machine guns.

3. **AMMUNITION:** Devices destined to be shot or projected through the means of firearms including among others:

- cartridges;
- projectiles and missiles for light weapons;
- mobile containers with missiles or projectiles for anti-aircraft or antitank single action systems;

4. **OTHER RELATED MATERIALS:** All components, parts or spare parts for small arms or light weapons or ammunition necessary for its functioning; or any chemical substance serving as active material used as propelling or explosive agent;

5. **ILLICIT:** Covers all that is carried out in violation of this Convention;

6. **MARKING:** Inscriptions permitting the identification of arms covered by this Convention;

7. **TRACING:** Indicates the systematic monitoring of the movements of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition and other related materials, from the manufacturer until the end user, with a view to helping member States competent authorities to detect illicit manufacture and trading;

8. **BROKERING:** Work carried out as an intermediary between any manufacturer, supplier or distributor of small arms and light weapons and any buyer or user; this includes the provision of financial support and the transportation of small arms and light weapons;

9. **TRANSFER:** Includes import, export, transit, transshipment and transport or any other movement whatsoever of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and other related materials from or through the territory of a State;

10. **NON-STATE ACTORS:** Such as any actor other than State Actors, mercenaries, armed militias, armed rebel groups and private security companies.

11. **SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS:** In this Convention this shall be deemed to include ammunition and other related materials.

## ARTICLE 2: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Convention are:

1. To prevent and combat the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons within ECOWAS;
2. To continue the efforts for the control of small arms and light weapons within ECOWAS;

3. To consolidate the gains of the Declaration of the Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and its Code of Conduct.
4. To promote trust between the Member States through concerted and transparent action on the control of small arms and light weapons within ECOWAS;
5. To build institutional and operational capacities of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and the Member States in the efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, their ammunitions and other related materials;
6. To promote the exchange of information and cooperation among the Member States.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **TRANSFER OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

#### ARTICLE 3:

##### PROHIBITION OF TRANSFER OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

1. Member States shall ban the transfer of small arms and light weapons and their manufacturing materials into their national territory or from/through their national territory.
2. Member State shall ban, without exception, transfers of small arms and light weapons to Non-State Actors that are not explicitly authorised by the importing Member.
3. Small arms and light weapons as defined in this Convention shall not be deemed to be goods for the purpose of Article 45 of ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993.

#### ARTICLE 4:

##### CONDITIONS OF EXEMPTION

1. A Member State can request exemption from the provisions of Article 3.1 in order to meet legitimate national defence and security needs, or to participate in peace support or other operations in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, or other regional or sub-regional body of which it is a member.
2. For the purpose of paragraph 1 of this article, Member States shall establish and maintain an effective system of export and import licensing or authorisation, as well as of measures on international transit, for the transfer of small arms and light weapons.
3. Each Member State shall take such measures as may be necessary to ensure that licensing or authorisation procedures are secure and that the authenticity of licensing or authorisation of the documents can be verified and validated.

#### ARTICLE 5:

##### PROCEDURES FOR EXEMPTION

1. The request for exemption for an arms transfer is transmitted for examination to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and must contain information on:
  - a) Details of the arms to be transferred—the quantity, exact type and kind of arms using ECOWAS classification system, including all serial numbers and other marks;

- b) Details of the supplier—full details (name of company and representative, address, and full contact details) of all companies and individuals involved, including brokers where relevant;
- c) Details of the supply process—the number and period of shipments, the routes including transit locations, the type of transport to be used, all companies involved in importing, freight forwarding and handling, details of the storage and management of the weapons whilst being transferred, the time period covered by the activity for which the exemption is requested;
- d) Details of the final end user—name of individual/company/institution and representative responsible, confirmation from relevant national authority that the end user is authorised to import weapons;
- e) Details of the end use.

2. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall apply the criteria for Article 6 of this Convention for exemption requests as well as those of paragraph (a) of this Article. Reasoned opinion of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall be sent confidentially to the Member State in order to confirm or refuse the opinion given. The final decision of Member States shall be taken by consensus. In the absence of a consensus, the exemption request as well as the reasoned opinion of the Executive Secretary shall be submitted for a final decision to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council.

3. The granting of an exemption shall be transmitted to the Member State concerned by the ECOWAS Executive Secretary through the issuing of an exemption certificate. The exemption certificate once issued must accompany the request for an export licence as well as the End-User-Certificate.

4. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall forward to the Member States information on exemptions and refusals granted within 90 days. The Executive Secretary shall also compile and publish a comprehensive annual report detailing all international arms transfers granted exemptions, and a list of refusals.

#### ARTICLE 6: CASES FOR REFUSAL OF EXEMPTIONS FOR TRANSFERS

1. A transfer shall not be authorised if:

- a) Authorisation on export, import, transit, transshipment or brokering considered as donation has not been provided by all States directly concerned with the transfer;
- b) All the required information has not been supplied to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary;
- c) The arms have not been marked according to requirements under this Convention.

2. A transfer shall not be authorised if its authorisation violates obligations of the requesting States as well as those of Member States, under international law including:

- a) Obligations under the Charter of the United Nations—including:
  - i. Binding resolutions of the United Nations Security Council such as those imposing arms embargoes;
  - ii. The prohibition on the use or threat of use of force;
  - iii. The prohibition on intervention in the internal affairs of another State.
- b) Universally accepted principles of international humanitarian law.
- c) Any other treaty or decision by which the Member States are bound, including:

- i. Binding decisions, including embargoes, adopted by relevant international, multilateral, regional and sub-regional bodies, such as the African Union Peace and Security Council, to which a State is party;
  - ii) Prohibitions of arms transfers that arise in particular treaties which a State is party to, such as Ottawa Convention on Antipersonnel Mines, the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols.
3. A transfer shall not be authorised if the arms are destined to be used:
  - a) for the violation of international humanitarian law or infringement of human and peoples' rights and freedoms, or for the purpose of oppression;
  - b) for the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law, genocide or crimes against humanity;
  - c) to worsen the internal situation in the country of final destination, in terms of provoking or prolonging armed conflicts, or aggravating existing tensions;
  - d) to carry out terrorist acts or support or encourage terrorism;
  - e) other than for the legitimate defence and security needs of the beneficiary country;
4. A transfer shall not be authorised if it is destined to:
  - a) be used for or to facilitate the commission of violent or organised crime;
  - b) adversely affect regional security; endanger peace, contribute to destabilising or uncontrolled accumulations of arms or military capabilities into a region, or otherwise contribute to regional instability;
  - c) hinder or obstruct sustainable development and unduly divert human and economic resources to armaments of the states involved in the transfer;
  - d) involve corrupt practices at any stage—from the supplier, through any middlemen or brokers, to the recipient;
5. A transfer shall not be authorised if it is likely to be diverted, within the transit or importing country or be re-exported, to unauthorized uses or users or into the illicit trade;
6. The Executive Secretary and all Member States shall provide elements of proof to apply the criteria enunciated in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the present article and to indicate the refusal of exemption request made by a Member State.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **MANUFACTURE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

#### ARTICLE 7: CONTROL OF THE MANUFACTURE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

1. Member States shall undertake to control the manufacture of small arms and light weapons within their national territories;
2. Each Member State shall regulate the activities of local small arms and light weapons manufacturers and shall undertake to adopt strategies and policies to the reduction and/or limitation of the manufacture of small arms and light weapons so as to control the local manufacture as well as their marketing in ECOWAS region.

3. Member States shall undertake to draft an exhaustive list of local manufacturers of small arms and light weapons and the registration of each of them into the national arms registers;
4. Where production and/or assembly capacities of small arms and light weapons exist within the ECOWAS region, Member States shall submit to the Executive Secretary. This data shall include the type of the arms and their quantity on their annual production.

#### ARTICLE 8:

#### MEASURES OF CONTROL FOR SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS MANUFACTURE

Without prejudice to the other measures that Member States will undertake to ensure the effective control of the manufacturing of small arms and light weapons on their national territory, a request for the manufacture of small arms and light weapons will not be granted if the requesting person has not given information relating to :

- a) Details of the arms to be manufactured—the quantity, exact type and kind of arms using ECOWAS classification system, including all serial numbers and other markings;
- b) The procedure for marking; the procedure for entering details of each small arm and light weapon into the national small arms and light weapons register; information on the storage and management of the weapons after manufacture.

### CHAPTER IV

#### TRANSPARENCY AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

#### ARTICLE 9:

#### NATIONAL DATABASE AND REGISTERS OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

1. Member States shall establish where they do not exist already, national computerised registers and database of small arms and light weapons.
2. The following information shall be recorded in the national registry:
  - a) Description of the product (type or model, calibre) and quantity (if it concerns a batch);
  - b) the content of the marking;
  - c) the names and addresses of the former and current owners and, when possible, successive owners;
  - d) the date of registration;
  - e) information concerning each transaction including:
    - i. the name and address of the shipper, the intermediary (where applicable), the consignee and the user indicated on the end-user-certificate;
    - ii. the point of departure, transit and destination, as well as the customs references and the dates of departure, transit and delivery to the end-user.
    - iii. the export, transit and import licence (quantities and batches corresponding to the same licence as well as the validity of the license);
    - iv. full details concerning the method of transport and transporter(s);
    - v. the controlling agency or agencies (at point of departure, transit and entry);



- vi. the nature of the transaction (commercial, non-commercial, private or public, conversion, repair);
  - vii. where applicable, the insurer and/or the financial institution intervening in the transaction.
3. Records shall be permanently kept in the register.

**ARTICLE 10:**  
**ECOWAS SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS DATABASE AND REGISTERS**

1. Member States undertake to establish a sub-regional database and register of small arms and light weapons under the ECOWAS Executive Secretary as a way of promoting confidence.
2. The ECOWAS Executive Secretariat shall develop in collaboration with the Member States the procedures for the setting up and management of the database and register as well as the issues to be covered.
3. The Member States shall provide the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat with all the necessary information for the operation of the sub-regional database and register of small arms and light weapons. Member States also undertake to transmit an annual report to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary detailing their orders or purchase of small arms and light weapons.
4. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall present an annual report on the workings of the sub-regional database and register of small arms and light weapons at the Summit of Heads of State and Government.
5. Records shall be kept in the register permanently.

**ARTICLE 11:**  
**REGISTER OF ARMS FOR PEACE OPERATIONS**

1. Member States undertake to:
  - a) Establish a register of small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related material destined for use in peacekeeping operations both inside and outside the ECOWAS territory under the ECOWAS Executive Secretary as a way of ensuring the control of movements of small arms and light weapons and their effective withdrawal at the end of peace operations in which Member States are participating.
  - b) Declare in this regard to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat all small arms and light weapons used in peace operations.
  - c) Declare to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary all the small arms and light weapons seized, collected and/or destroyed during peace operations on their territory and in the ECOWAS region.
2. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall take the necessary measures to ensure the adequate recording of the information transmitted by the Member States participating to peace operations.
3. Records shall be permanently kept in the register.

**ARTICLE 12:**  
**DIALOGUE WITH MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS**

1. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary and each Member State shall strengthen cooperation and dialogue with national and international manufacturers and suppliers of arms as well as with the competent international and regional organisations in order to ensure their support, respect for and compliance with the spirit and the letter of this Convention.

2. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall take the necessary measures to take advantage of the information available from Member States of the Wassenaar Arrangement, the European Union and other manufacturers and suppliers of arms, in order to strengthen the effective implementation of this Convention.

**ARTICLE 13:**  
**PREVENTION OF AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION**

Member States shall institute appropriate and effective measures for cooperation between administrative departments concerned and law enforcement agencies to curb corruption associated with the illicit manufacturing of, trafficking in, illicit possession and use of small arms and light weapons.

**CHAPTER V**  
**OPERATIONAL MECHANISM**

**ARTICLE 14:**  
**CONTROL OF POSSESSION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS BY CIVILIANS**

1. Member States shall prohibit the possession, use and sale of light weapons by civilians.
2. Member States shall regulate the possession, use and sale of small arms by civilians.
3. Authorisations may be granted to permit individual possession of one or more small arms and their ammunition in line with the legislation of each Member State. Applications for such authorisations shall be processed by relevant national authorities. All applicants must the relevant national authority in person. The Executive Secretary shall develop and communicate authorisation procedures to the relevant national authority.
4. Member States undertake to implement a strict control regime for civilian possession of the small arms. The authorisation procedure will involve issuing a license from the relevant national authority for each small arm used by a civilian. Member States shall not grant an authorisation if the applicant does not meet the following criteria:
  - a) The required minimum age;
  - b) Applicant does not have criminal record and has not been subject to morality investigation;
  - c) Proof of a legitimate reason to possess, carry or use for each small arms;
  - d) Proof that the prospective owner has undergone safety training and competency training including training in the relevant laws regarding small arms;
  - e) Proof that the weapon will be stored in a safe place and separately from its ammunition.

5. Member States shall impose a limit on the number of weapons a licence may cover and require a 'cooling off' period of at least 21 days before an authorisation is granted for the possession of each weapon. Member States shall include an expiration date on each licence and authorisations shall be subject to periodic review. Contravention of regulations concerning possession of small arms in private hands will allow the small arms to be seized by the authorities, the licence/authorisation revoked, and adequate sanctions including penalties applied.

6. Member States shall include information regarding the civilian possession of small arms within the national small arm database and register established under Article 9 of the present Convention;

7. Member States undertake to introduce minimum penal sanctions for the illicit possession and use of small arms and light weapons and the carrying of unlicensed small arms.

#### ARTICLE 15: VISITORS' CERTIFICATES

1. Each Member State shall take the appropriate measures demanding that visitors wanting to import temporarily small arms covered by this Convention for the duration of their temporary stay in the ECOWAS region, prepare in advance an application including information about the purpose, type and marking of small arms to be imported into one of the ECOWAS territories and to declare the arms on their arrival. Such application shall be addressed to the relevant authorities of the Member State concerned for decision.

2. ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall issue guidelines on the procedures to be followed and communicate them to the relevant authority.

3. If the request is agreed, the competent national authorities shall issue to the visitors an entry certificate and an exit declaration at the visitors' arrival and departure.

4. All certificates shall be recorded by the Member States concerned in the national small arms register referred to in compliance with the above mentioned Article 9.

#### ARTICLE 16: MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY OF STOCKPILES

1. Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure the safe and effective management, storage and security of their national stocks of small arms and light weapons;

2. To this effect, Member States shall establish effective standards and procedures for stockpile management, storage and security. These standards and procedures shall include:

- a) appropriate site;
- b) physical security measures of storage facilities;
- c) inventory management and record keeping;
- d) staff training;
- e) security during manufacture and transportation;
- f) sanctions in case of theft or loss.

3. Member States shall ensure that stockpiles of small arms and light weapons by manufacturers, dealers as well as individuals are securely stored in accordance with the appropriate standards and procedures;

4. Member States shall undertake to regularly review, in accordance with national laws and standards, the storage facilities and conditions of small arms and light weapons held by their armed and security forces and other authorised bodies in order to identify, for disposal, surplus and obsolete stocks;

5. The Executive Secretary shall ensure, in collaboration with Member States, that effective standards and procedures for stockpile management of weapons collected in the context of peace operations are duly observed.

#### ARTICLE 17

##### COLLECTION AND DESTRUCTION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

1. Member States shall undertake to collect and/ or destroy:

- a) the arms which are surplus to the national needs or have become obsolete;
- b) seized weapons;
- c) unmarked weapons;
- d) illicitly held weapons;
- e) arms collected in the implementation of peace accords or programmes for the voluntary handing in of weapons.

2. All weapons so collected must be registered and securely stored and or destroyed.

3. Member States undertake to promote and/or carry out programme of voluntary handing in of weapons.

#### ARTICLE 18

##### MARKING

1. For identification purposes, all small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other materials, considered as essential by the supplier, shall be assigned a unique and specific marking upon manufacture; this marking shall include the following elements:

2. For small arms and light weapons covered under this Convention,

- a) "Classic marking" shall include a unique serial number, the manufacturer's identity, as well as the identification of the country and year of manufacture. Information concerning the purchaser's identity and the country of destination should also be included if known at the time of manufacture. The markings shall be expressed alphanumerically. They must be legible and should be featured on a maximum number of main parts of the weapon, and at the very least on the part designated by the manufacturer as essential as well as on one other important part of the arm;
- b) A "Security marking" shall be applied to all weapons produced after the entry into force of this Convention. This will permit the identification of the weapons in the event that classic markings have been destroyed or falsified. Security markings must be undertaken on component parts that are not easily manipulated after the weapon's manufacture, and the falsification of which would render the weapon unusable;
- c) Member States that import a small arm that is not marked in accordance with the provisions outlined under paragraph a) and b) above shall:
  - i. Apply a classic marking if the weapons were manufactured before the entry into force of this Convention;

- ii. Apply a classic marking and a security marking if the weapons were manufactured after the entry into force of this Convention; failing this, the weapons cannot be imported or must be destroyed.
  - iii. If the importing country and the year of import are not known at the time of manufacture, the acronym of the importing State and the year of importation are marked by a competent institution in the importing country.
3. For ammunition:
- a) The markings shall include a unique lot number, the manufacturer's identity, as well as the country and year of manufacture. Information concerning the purchaser's identity and the country of destination should also be included if known at the time of manufacture. These details must feature at least once on the jacket (i.e. cartridge) containing the powder or liquid used in the ammunition or explosive. The markings shall be expressed alphanumerically.
  - b) The smallest ammunition packaging shall include information outlined under 3(a).

## ARTICLE 19 TRACING

1. Member States shall exchange information on illicit small arms and light weapons and on seized small arms and light weapons, as well as trafficking in weapons that contravene international law or the internal laws of the States in which the operations take place (condemnation of the person or institution implicated, sanctions, disposal, destruction methods, neutralisation).
2. In the case of other small arms and light weapons, Member States shall exchange the following data on a regular basis:
  - a) on manufacture (the marking system and techniques used, and authorized manufacturers);
  - b) on transfers (exports to and/or imports from all other States, transits, information available concerning national legislation, existing practices and controls, authorised dealers and brokers);
  - c) on existing stockpiles (management, inventory, security, surplus, losses, theft, destruction).
3. The Executive Secretary shall receive request for exemption and shall act in accordance with Article 5 of this Convention.
4. A Member State may initiate a tracing request through the ECOWAS Executive Secretary in relation to small arms and light weapons found within its territorial jurisdiction that it considers to be illicit.
5. To ensure smooth and effective cooperation in tracing, requests for assistance in tracing illicit small arms or light weapons will contain sufficient information including, inter alia:
  - a) Information describing the illicit nature of the small arm and light weapon, including the legal justification thereof and circumstances under which the small arm and light weapon was found;
  - b) Markings, type, calibre and other relevant information;
  - c) Intended use of the information being sought.
6. Member States receiving a tracing request shall acknowledge receipt within a reasonable time frame.
7. Member States shall provide reliable responses to tracing requests made by other Member States within one month from the date of receipt of the said request.

8. In responding to a tracing request, the requested Member States shall provide all available information sought by the requesting Member States that is relevant for the purpose of tracing illicit small arms and light weapons.

9. The requested Member States may seek additional information from the requesting Member States where a tracing request does not contain the information required in Paragraph 5 above.

## ARTICLE 20

### BROKERING

1. Member States shall register all citizens and all companies incorporated in their territory that are brokering small arms and light weapons, including financial agents and transportation agents on armament and shall make such registration a requirement for their licit operation.

2. Member States shall ensure that all registered small arms and light weapons brokering agents obtain an explicit authorization for each individual transaction in which they are involved irrespective of where the arrangements take place.

3. Member States shall require that all small arms and light weapons brokering license applications for authorisation provide full disclosure of relevant import and export licences or authorisations and associated relevant documents, the names and locations of all brokering and shipping agents involved in the transaction and the transit routes and points of the small arms and light weapons shipments.

4. Member States shall adopt such legislative and other measures to punish and establish as a criminal offence the illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons.

5. Brokering activities may be assessed under Article 1 and 6 of the present Convention.

## ARTICLE 21

### HARMONIZATION OF LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

1. Member States shall undertake to revise and update national legislation to ensure that the provisions in this Convention are minimum standards for small arms and light weapons control and their ammunition as well as other related materials.

2. Each Member State shall adopt legislative and other necessary measures to establish as a criminal offence in the following cases:

- a) any activity carried out in violation of the provisions of this Convention;
- b) any activity carried out in violation of an arms embargo imposed by the United Nations, the African Union or ECOWAS;

3. The Executive Secretary shall elaborate and propose to Member States guidelines for harmonization of legislative provisions.

## ARTICLE 22

### STRENGTHENING OF BORDER CONTROLS

Member States, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, shall:

- a) Strengthen sub-regional cooperation among defence and security forces, intelligence services, customs and border control officials in combating the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons.



- b) Enhancing the capacity of national defence and security forces, law enforcement and security agencies, including appropriate training in investigative procedures, border control and law enforcement techniques, and upgrading of equipment and resources;

#### ARTICLE 23

##### PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

1. In the interest of promoting a culture of peace, Member States shall design public/community education and awareness programmes at local, national and regional levels in order to involve the population in the efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
2. Member States in this regard shall undertake to develop and/or strengthen their partnership with civil society organisations at local, national and regional level including women, youth and others, for better information and raise public awareness on the dangers of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
3. Member States shall encourage civil society organisations to play a leading role in creating awareness and education of the population.

#### CHAPTER VI

##### INSTITUTIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

#### ARTICLE 24

##### MEMBER STATES

1. Within the framework of the implementation of this Convention, the States Parties which have not yet done so, shall establish through regulation or legislation a National Commission in accordance with Article 51 of the Protocol on mechanisms for prevention, management, resolution of conflict and keeping peace and security and with the enforcement of the decision of the Conference of Heads of State and Government on December 10th, 1999 on the establishment of National Commissions for the fight against the illicit proliferation and circulation of light weapons.
2. The National Commissions shall be established according to the existing ECOWAS guidelines contained in the National Manual prepared by ECOWAS.
3. Member States shall allocate a budget line to ensure effective functioning of National Commissions
4. The Member States shall elaborate their National Action Plans on Small Arms and Light Weapons.
5. Such action plans shall be developed through a national information gathering process involving all relevant national stakeholders including civil society, and the convening of a national forum of all stakeholders to deliberate on the elements to be included in the National Action Plan.

#### ARTICLE 25

##### THE ECOWAS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

1. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary is responsible for supporting and supervising the application of the provisions of this Convention. To this end the ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall:

- a) define and carry out the policy for mobilising the necessary resources for the implementation of this Convention;
- b) provide the Member States with the necessary financial and technical support for the realisation of their activities;
- c) ensure the monitoring and implementation of this Convention;
- d) present an annual Report to the Summit of Heads of State and Government on the status of implementation of the Convention.
- e) if ECOWAS Executive Secretary deems it necessary, refer a specific urgent and/or serious question regarding the application of this Convention to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council.

2. The Executive Secretary shall develop a Plan of action for the implementation of this Convention and submit it to the appreciation of the Member States for adoption. Such a plan shall outline key activities that need to be implemented (such as Capacity Building, harmonization of national legislation, border control, public awareness raising, information exchange among National Commissions, strengthening the capacity of civil society, organisations, etc).

3. Member States shall take the necessary measures to endow the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat with the institutional and operational capacities appropriate to the responsibilities given to the Executive Secretary by this Convention.

#### ARTICLE 26 COOPERATION WITHIN AND AMONG STATES

1. Member States undertake to promote intra and inter-state cooperation in the implementation of this Convention. To this effect:

- a) the ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall prepare procedures for interstate cooperation between security forces, the services in charge of border controls and all other services concerned, in the spirit of this Convention.
- b) The ECOWAS Executive Secretary shall facilitate and seek assistance for the training of officials in intra- and interstate cooperation.

#### ARTICLE 27 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE CONCERNING VIOLATION OF THIS CONVENTION

1. All concerns relating to the violation of this Convention shall be brought to the attention of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary who would then submit such a complaint to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council;

2. If the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council considers that there is a breach of the obligations under this convention, it shall decide on the appropriate measures to be taken such as sanctions, inquiry, study or refer the matter to the ECOWAS Court of Justice;

3. This review procedure of complaints shall not mean the impossibility for a State or an individual to refer to the ECOWAS Court of Justice if it notes a failure in the application of this Convention.

## ARTICLE 28

### MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS CONVENTION

1. In order to ensure the monitoring of and compliance with the provisions of this Convention, the Executive Secretary shall appoint a Group of Independent Experts who supports him. The Group of Independent Experts shall submit a report to the Executive Secretary.
2. Member States, upon the request of the Executive Secretary, shall provide the Group of Independent Experts with all information at their disposal on exemption request.
3. The Group of Independent Experts may seek any other information it shall deem useful for its work in relation with Member States and through cooperation with Member States of the Wassenaar Arrangements, the European Union and suppliers of arms.
4. Each Member State shall submit an annual report to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary on its activities related to small arms and light weapons as well as other matters in relation with this Convention, in accordance with the format of report developed by the Executive Secretary.
5. A Conference of all Parties to the Convention shall be convened by the Depositary as soon as possible after the entry into force of this Convention. The Conference of Heads of State and Government of member States shall review the implementation of this Convention and shall have further mandates as decided by Member States. Other Conferences of Member States shall be held as needed.

## CHAPTER VII

### GENERAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

## ARTICLE 29

### INTERPRETATION AND DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

1. Any dispute arising out of the interpretation and/or the implementation of the Convention shall be settled by way of negotiation or by recourse to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council.
2. In the absence of a negotiated settlement, the dispute shall be brought before the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

## ARTICLE 30

### SPECIAL PROVISIONS

The undertakings ensuing from the provisions of this Convention shall not be interpreted as being in contradiction to the spirit and letter of the Conventions or Accords linking a Member State with a Third State as long as these Conventions and Accords are not in contradiction with the spirit and letter of this Convention.

## ARTICLE 31

### SANCTIONS

Sanctions mentioned in Article 77 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty are applicable to all Member States whom the ECOWAS Court of Justice would have found to be in violation of this Convention.

ARTICLE 32  
FINAL PROVISIONS

**(a) Signature, Ratification, Accession and Entry into Force**

1. This Convention shall be open for signature to ECOWAS Member States. It shall be subject to ratification.
2. It shall enter into force on the date of deposit of the ninth instrument of ratification.
3. For a signatory that ratifies this Convention after the date of the deposit of the ninth instrument of ratification, it shall enter into force for that signatory on the date of deposit of its instrument of ratification.
4. Any ECOWAS Member State that has not signed this Convention shall be able to accede to it. In this case, this Convention shall enter into force for that State upon the date of the deposit of the instrument of accession.

**(b) Amendments**

1. Any amendment to this Convention proposed by a Member State shall be submitted to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary who shall notify the Member States.
2. Decision on the adoption of such an amendment shall be taken by the Conference of Heads of State and Government by a two-thirds majority of the Member States.
3. An amendment so adopted shall enter into force for all Member States who are party to this Convention after receipt by the Depository of the instrument of ratification by the majority of Member States.

**(c) Withdrawal**

1. Each Member State shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Convention if it decides that extraordinary events related to the subject-matter of this Convention, have jeopardised its supreme interests.
2. Withdrawal shall be effected by a Member State giving notice, which includes a statement of the extraordinary events it regards as having jeopardised its supreme interest, twelve months in advance to the Depository. The Depository shall circulate such notice to all other Member States.
3. During the period of twelve months referred to in the preceding paragraph, such Member State shall nevertheless continue to observe the provisions of this Convention.

**(d) Depository Authority**

1. This Convention shall be deposited with the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, who is hereby designated as the Depository of the Convention.
2. The Depository shall:
  - a) Receive instruments of ratification;
  - b) Register this Convention with the African Union, the United Nations, as well as any other organisation as may be decided by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council;
  - c) Transmit authentic copies of this Convention to all States in the ECOWAS region, and shall notify them of signatures and ratifications and accession of this Convention.

IN FAITH WHEREOF, WE, THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) HAVE SIGNED THIS CONVENTION IN THREE ORIGINALS IN THE ENGLISH, FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE LANGUAGES, ALL TEXTS, BEING EQUALLY AUTHENTIC.

DONE AT ABUJA, ON 14TH DAY OF JUNE, 2006





### PROJECT UPDATE

#### *The Road from Oslo: Analysis of Negotiations to Address the Humanitarian Effects of Cluster Munitions*

This project, launched in March 2008, examines the emergence and conduct of international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions.

There is both controversy and widespread humanitarian concern about the hazards posed by cluster munitions to civilians at time of use and after hostilities cease. In part because of frustration about constraints on the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons' (CCW) capacity to respond effectively, a new international humanitarian initiative—the so-called Oslo Process—emerged in early 2007 with the aim of banning “cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians” (Final Declaration of the Oslo Conference of 22–23 February 2007). In late 2007, the CCW itself achieved a mandate to “negotiate a proposal to address urgently the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, while striking a balance between military and humanitarian considerations”.

The emergence of two global multilateral initiatives working simultaneously to regulate or restrict the same weapon system is highly unusual, perhaps unprecedented, in modern international security negotiations. On 30 May 2008, 107 states adopted the outcome of the Oslo Process, a new Convention on Cluster Munitions that, in addition to banning the weapon, contains ground-breaking provisions on clearance, victim assistance and international cooperation and assistance between donor and affected states. In contrast, the CCW was unable to agree on a new protocol on cluster munitions that November, and will continue its efforts in 2009.

In a difficult contemporary multilateral security environment, the emergence of the Oslo Process was encouraging to some. But it has not been without controversy, not least because it is perceived as threatening by certain CCW member states who worry that such free-standing initiatives may subvert existing multilateral disarmament institutions, in which the practice of consensus has traditionally held sway.

Many multilateral practitioners have compared the Oslo Process with efforts to achieve the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, viewing the process as a continuation of “new diplomacy”

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In each issue of Disarmament Forum, UNIDIR Focus highlights one activity of the Institute, outlining the project's methodology, recent research developments or its outcomes. UNIDIR Focus also describes a new UNIDIR publication. You can find summaries and contact information for all of the Institute's present and past activities, and download or order our publications, online at <[www.unidir.org](http://www.unidir.org)>.

heralded by the mine ban efforts. But it is unclear to what extent this is actually the case, and what the consequences of international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions will be on disarmament diplomacy and regime-building.

Following on from part of UNIDIR's project Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work, this 18-month study is documenting the Oslo Process and related work, including that in the CCW, and developing lessons-learned of relevance to multilateral practitioners. Main project outputs comprise seminars with policy-makers and civil society actors, and an analytical history of the Oslo Process, to be published in the second half of 2009.

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**NEW PUBLICATION**

***Security in Space: The Next Generation. Conference Report 31 March–1 April 2008***

“Security in Space: The Next Generation” is the seventh annual conference held by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the issue of space security, the peaceful uses of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

This conference looked at ways to build trust in space activities in the future as well as how to move from confrontation to cooperation as a way to increase space security and improve access to outer space for peaceful activities. Participants and presenters discussed the need for new international legal instruments, with specific reference to the China–Russia proposal for a Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects.

***Security in Space: The Next Generation. Conference Report 31 March–1 April 2008***

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