



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Inter-parliamentary Conference
1-2 October 2010
Monrovia, Liberia

“Parliamentary Action on Small Arms in West Africa”

FINAL REPORT



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Introduction

The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) and the House of Representatives of Liberia held an Inter-Parliamentary Conference for West Africa in Monrovia, Liberia, on 1-2 October 2010.

Twenty parliamentarians from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, The Gambia, Togo government representatives, experts and civil society participated in the event. Parliamentarians from selected Central Africa States, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were invited to start the sensitization of this other African sub-region to these issues.

West Africa has been hit hard by civil wars and violent conflicts, fought mainly with small arms and light weapons (SALW) and a large number of weapons remain in the area. Parliamentarians have an important role in controlling and stopping the spread of these weapons as well as agents for change in the peaceful resolution of tensions.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Hon. Worlea Dunah, Member of Parliament of Liberia, who welcomed all participants to the conference. Representatives from the organising partners followed with a short introduction.

Senator John Ballout of Liberia started his welcoming speech by stating that there are no one better suited to tackle the problem of SALW than parliamentarians. Liberia has now stopped fighting and has managed to collect many of the arms used during the civil wars (1989–1996 and 1999–2003) but we need to continue to minimize the possibilities of conflict. Liberia has come a long way in terms of democracy. The United Nations and cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are of great help. However, the illicit trade in SALW within West Africa still occurs and arms are easily trafficked across borders. This can always lead to temptations for criminal elements. By working together consistently and persistently we all have one overall objective: to build a safer country for all.

Mr. Gerard from UNREC continued by saying that the mandate of the Regional Centre is to assist countries to control arms, within their territories. The UN System as a whole has developed a keen interest in the work of parliaments, for a number of reasons. Parliamentarians create and renew legislation necessary for arms control, they supervise the executive branch and have a role in preventing conflict and building peace. Since they work in constituencies they can bring up local worries and insecurities on the agenda and find solutions. They are also responsible for ratifying international instruments on SALW, which set out basic criteria to regulate arms. Their role in the financial and budgetary realm is also important

Mr. Weiderud from the Parliamentary Forum on SALW took the opportunity to specially thank Hon. Dunah and his staff for their help making this conference possible and gave a brief introduction on the Forum.

The Parliamentary Forum on SALW is a young organization of parliamentarians worldwide concerned with the un-controlled proliferation of small arms. The work originates from the

aftermath of the hurricane Mitch in Central America in the 90s when it became clear to many actors in the international community that the proliferation of small arms was a major obstacle to re-building the societies. Today the Forum joins 200 parliamentarians in close to 60 different countries. The method of bringing parliamentarians from different countries and continents together to share perspectives and learning from each other is crucial when dealing with issues of international peace and security.

Following on Mr. Gerard's description of the key role of parliamentarians, he stated that the disarmament of SALW is a very complex issue, which makes it necessary for parliamentarians to work with all their available tools. He believed this to be the main reason for the growing interest among a variety of parliamentarians—women and men, from the political right, left and centre and from small countries and large countries—to work with small arms.

1. Session I: Parliamentarians contribution: From Lomé to Monrovia

This meeting is one in a series of parliamentary meetings held in West Africa during 2009-2010. Previous meetings have been organised in Lomé, Bamako, Accra and Ouagadougou, organised by UNREC, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons. All meetings were aimed at identifying the role of national Parliaments in the work for SALW control in West Africa as well as the role of parliamentarians in relations to the oversight of the implementation of such control measures by the executive and armed and security forces.

The main issues and related recommendations discussed throughout the meetings are the following.

1.2. Adaptation of International, Regional and Sub-regional Instruments on SALW Control into National Legislations

The main international instruments were presented and discussed, including;

- The UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA)
- The UN Firearms Protocol
- The International Tracing Instrument
- The Reports of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Ammunition and Explosives,
- The Report of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Illicit Arms Brokering
- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as well as the Report of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on an ATT.

At regional and sub-regional level, the existing instruments were taken into consideration, including the Bamako Declaration, the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of SALW and the ECOWAS Convention on SALW, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

The process for the transposition of the above-mentioned instruments into national legislation has been discussed not only from a general point of view, that is the different ratification procedures, but also in the light of the institutional specificities of each country. Other African sub-regional instruments, such as the Nairobi Declaration, were taken into consideration in order to make a

comparison between the different areas over the level of coordination and participation of national Parliaments.

Recommendations:

- The Members of Parliament should participate in regional and international meetings on the implementation of the UN PoA;
- National Parliaments should play an active role in the drafting of national reports on the implementation of the UN PoA;
- National and regional coordinating and policy-level meetings amongst relevant stakeholders for the discussion on an ATT should be held;
- Representatives to the ATT preparatory committees should be nominated;
- More involvement of Members of Parliament for advocacy on the ATT is needed. ECOWAS should then submit these requests to the Africa Group before the UN General Assembly discussions;
- National Parliaments should promote the ratification of the ECOWAS Convention and the UN Firearms Protocol;
- National Parliaments should adapt national legislation to the dispositions and the minimum standards of the ECOWAS Convention;
- When needed, new legislations on SALW should be created in conformity with international obligations;
- Legislations on SALW should be harmonized following the examples of Eastern African countries such as Burundi, DRC and Rwanda in the framework of the Nairobi Protocol and the Mombasa Parliamentary Plan of Action;
- The issue of homemade or craft weapons which easily cross borders in the sub-region should be addressed through regulatory measures rather than a ban;
- The issue of violence among young people should be addressed;
- Early warning systems for escalating human rights violations should be put in place;
- National legislation on conventional ammunition stockpiles should be reinforced.

1.3. Parliamentarian control over the Government and the Security Sector.

In many countries of the sub-region, national Parliaments suffer from budget constraints, and the division of roles, functions and responsibilities is unclear within the institutional framework and even more confused in the development of practical activities. Moreover, the growing trend of a shift from public to private security companies entails a dramatic reduction in the level of parliamentarian control over the national security sector.

Recommendations:

- National Parliaments should reinforce the control over the governmental organs in charge of the implementation of international, regional and sub-regional instruments by requesting periodic reports on the implementation of the national legislation on SALW and the National Plan of Action on SALW;
- National Parliaments should make recommendations to the governments for the definition of the respective attributions of different government offices in the fight against illicit SALWs;
- National Parliaments should encourage countries to computerize their SALW databases and share best practices from other countries where computerization is taking place. Accessibility of database to national actors should be allowed;

- The creation of joint commissions with the participation of Member of Parliaments and security forces is needed;
- National Parliaments should formulate legislative and regulatory framework and develop effective mechanisms for the control and oversight of the security sector. In particular, the lack of legitimacy and accountability of private security companies should be addressed.

1.4. National Commissions on SALW NatCom

The most important actors for the implementation of the UN PoA, and other international instruments, and the ECOWAS Convention are the National Commissions (NatComs). In the ECOWAS sub-region, NatComs have been established by all Member States except for a few countries that established National Committees or Focal Points, which perform the same functions. For the NatComs to work properly, it was felt that it is important to have structures both at national and sub-regional level. Hence, ECOWAS States established an umbrella structure: namely the Network of National Commissions in West Africa. Most NatComs are facing a lack of financial resources to implement relevant activities, capacity issues in terms of staffing and problems related to the lack of sustainable resources.

Recommendations:

- NatComs should send a copy of the National Reports submitted to ECOWAS and the UN PoA to their national Parliaments;
- Members of Parliaments should raise awareness in their constituencies about the work of NatComs;
- The Network of National Commissions in West Africa should be reinforced;
- The level of participation of National Parliaments into NatComs should be increased;
- NatComs should reinforce their cooperation with Parliamentary Security and Defence Commissions;
- Aside from control measures, proactive and preventative measures should be taken by NatComs, such as awareness raising, education, promotion of a culture of peace and mediation;
- NatComs should have an independent structure with their own budget lines and bank accounts, a permanent secretariat, staff, equipment etc.

1.5. Coordination and harmonization of SALW control strategies

The harmonization of national legislations, as well as the coordination with all relevant actors in the sector of SALW control at national, regional and international level is considered as fundamental by every existing treaty on this issue. Dialogues, exchange of information and best practices, participation to forum at all levels are the means through which the national Parliaments can play a central role in the harmonization process.

Recommendations:

- More coordination is needed between the States of the sub-region;
- The creation of sub-regional and national parliamentarian networks on SALW, under the assistance of the ECOWAS and the West Africa Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) is needed;
- The creation of an African continental strategy on SALW control is desirable for a better integration of the sub-regions under the umbrella of the AU;
- More cooperation between civil society (WAANSA, religious leaders, women), national Parliaments and security forces is needed;

- More coordination between constituencies is needed;
- A yearly meeting between the Members of the ECOWAS Parliament and the Representatives of the Defense Commissions of the sub-region should be established;
- National delegations, comprising parliamentarians, should participate in international or sub-regional negotiating conferences on SALW, such as the Biennial Meeting of States.

1.6. Debate

A discussion followed where the following points were brought up.

The delegation from The Gambia congratulated Liberia for hosting the conference as well as the country's work towards democracy. The election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was highlighted as very significant to achieving peace especially. However, SALW used in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast are still circulating in the sub-region.

The delegation from Benin asked about budgets and or the lack of thereof and inquired about the experience of other countries in setting up national parliamentary networks on small arms. A few questions were also raised on how the UN can assist States, who has the will to control the executive and what can the UN do to promote good governance and to eliminate the spread of SALW?

Senegal reported that it has participated actively and followed the UN processes closely. There is a parliamentary network on SALW in the National Assembly of Senegal which was established in partnership with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of the Armed Forces. She also highlighted that it is important that ECOWAS assists in harmonisation of legislations in the region.

Cameroon responded that they have no such network but that there was a need to take into consideration the political instability and the risk for political violence, in particular at election time. These elements needed to be factored in when addressing SALW control and proliferation, as the availability these weapons can often mean a spiralling of tension into violent conflict.

The responsibility of the arms producer was strongly underscored by the delegation from Ghana. It is imperative to get those responsible involved and have a debate with them

Mr. Gerard answered the questions raised. Regarding how parliamentary oversight of the executive can be more effective he called on the parliamentarians present to share their experiences. However, strong capacity is very important. A guide for the harmonization of SALW legislation is currently under development for ECOWAS and once this guide has been approved by ECOWAS we can start using it.

Regarding how we can assess the level of success is a hard question with no straight answer. It is a task for the international community. We do not know exactly how many weapons are around neither globally nor in the sub region. What we know is that the weapons currently used in the region are recycled weapons rather than weapons coming from outside. There is still a demand for weapons in the region. If we do not have control of existing SALW, once unrest begins it is too late.

We need to make ourselves aware and switch gears to listen to the local population to hear what they say since they are the ones affected.

2. Session II: Working with the Executive – National Commissions

The session was facilitated by Hon. Drissa Sanogo, Member of Parliament, Burkina Faso.

2.2. National Commission of Benin

Prof. Bonaventure d'Oliviera, President of the National Commission on SALW of Benin, gave an introduction by proposing the determination and implementation of a specific SALW policy by the National Commissions, which is crucial for promoting peace and security in the region.

Awareness among Heads of State and Government in Africa of the dangers of balkanization has resulted in a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa, adopted by the Heads of State of ECOWAS, adopted in 1998. Among other things, the Code of Conduct following the Moratorium require states to set up National Commission on SALW to harmonise legislation, to train of security personnel and to report any weapons and ammunition used in the context of peacekeeping.

The National Commission is composed of representatives of the relevant authorities and ministries as well as civil society representatives and is needed to coordinate actions at national level to coincide with efforts on the regional and international levels as well as to control efforts aimed at addressing the problems within the national territory that are related to SALW.

The effectiveness of these functions depends strongly on the relationships with government departments, the size of the structure, the level of responsibility as well as the location. There are gaps in the structure of the NatCom in terms of lack of human resources, inefficiencies of communication with government departments, and the absence of an institutional mechanism. He continued by observing that a strengthened role and capacity of the NatCom is vital to assist the implementation of national policies to fight problems with SALW more effectively, and that such capacity building must be done in all areas: legal, administrative and financial.

The fight against illicit SALW requires a coordinated, comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach and United Nations Member States must undertake political and legal measures for the establishment of regional coordination mechanisms. He ended by saying that achieving good governance is done by obtaining security for individuals and ensuring sustainable development. Parliamentary action is imperative.

The full presentation can be found in attached appendix 1 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

2.3. National Commission of Liberia

Mr. Edward Togba, National Commission of Liberia, started with a brief overview on the establishment of the Liberian National Commission on Small Arms (LINGSA). He described that the realization of a need for small arms control in Liberia connected with the armed conflicts in Liberia and the instability issues plaguing the Mano River Basin, were contributing factors to the sub-regional efforts which culminated in 1998 with the ECOWAS Moratorium, which Prof. d'Oliveira also brought to attention.

Years later, in 2004, a technical working group was established with the mission to work towards the creation of a National Commission on Small Arms in Liberia. Seven ministries along with the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA) were part of the group. The working group transformed in 2006 to a full-fledged National Commission on Small Arms. In 2009, the Parliament of Liberia ratified the ECOWAS Convention which was seen as a major progress. The broad membership of LINCOSA is drawn from ministries and government agencies as well as the Religious Council of Liberia and civil society organizations.

Mr. Togba pointed out that LINCOSA has been involved in a number of activities aiming to make Liberia a gun free society and a safer place. LINCOSA shall, without limitations, have functions like developing and implement national action plans to control arms, develop policies for a meaningful and sustainable participation from the civil society, to share its information with other NatComs and to coordinate and design effective public education and awareness campaigns on small arms and light weapons. However financing is proving to be a challenge.

Mr. Togba finished with the important role that parliamentarians should play in making sure the ECOWAS Convention is fully implemented. He stressed the role that parliamentarians have in public awareness raising on the dangers of SALW. To keep peace we need to make sure that the laws controlling small arms are enacted, we need to continue creating awareness on the danger and threats linked to illicit small arms and light weapons. By ratification of the ECOWAS Convention this is now a legally binding instrument that Governments are bound to implement.

The full presentation can be found in attachment 2 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

2.4. Debate

During the discussion the question on the role and responsibility of producing and exporting States was raised again. Mr. Togba highlighted the earlier mentioned Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), that is currently under discussion in the United Nations. This is an instrument which hopefully in the future can control the trade in weapons.

Another vital question was why parliamentarians are not part of National Commissions, since they would be an important contribution.

The answer given was that this would cause confusion between the executive and the legislative branches of government. Legislative is there to oversee the implementation of the executive, i.e. the NatComs, so parliamentarians cannot officially be part of it. However, their supervision role is very important as well as their interest supporting the work of the NatComs.

3. Session III: Addressing root causes, changing cultures: contribution of parliamentarians

Facilitator for this session was Mr. Peter Weiderud, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW. He mentioned that one observation after the Bamako Conference earlier this year, is that Parliamentarians in West Africa have come a long way when it comes to control issues on small arms, thanks to the comprehensive measures taken within the framework of ECOWAS.

There was, however, a need identified in Bamako to deepen the discussion and understanding on how to deal with the root causes of armed violence. Thereafter he introduced Mr. Robert Miller, coordinator of LANSA.

Mr. Robert Miller, Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA) and WAANSA Executive Committee member, began his session by underlining the consequences of the uncontrolled presence of small arms: as social disruptions, deaths and violations of human rights considered as one of the major obstacles to achieve human development.

He identified some of the causes of small arms violence: the dominance of one branch of government - the executive - over the two other branches - the legislative and the judiciary; lack of educational and economic opportunities; issues of access to land and its unfair distribution; violations of Human Rights and absence of redress; corruption; ethnic tensions; or unfair distribution of resources and wealth.

Mr. Miller stressed that the contribution of parliaments is essential for example in contributing to the system for controlling the legal transfers between States, where relevant measures would be to implement national and regional codes of conduct on the supply of arms as well as the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention promoting a regional control on the import, export and production on small arms.

When it comes to the domestic control of small arms, Robert Miller argued that strict controls should be applied to civilian ownership and that governments should not sponsor transfers to non-State armed groups. Regarding the prevention of illicit transfers, Mr. Miller talked about promoting and developing local, national, regional and international agreements in preventing illicit weapons trafficking. Parliamentarians have a role to play in monitoring illicit transfers of arms.

Mr. Miller addressed the question of changing cultures and highlighted that a positive economic, political and social environment is needed to reduce the demand for small arms. Important in reversing cultures of violence is education and the promotion of peaceful resolutions for conflict. Miller also shed light on reintegration programs for former combatants and in particular child soldiers, stressing that special education programs and creation of social capital are vital for their future development, also underlining that recruitment of child combatants should be a criminal offence.

Societies also need support in building local justice systems where perpetrators can be made accountable for their crimes. Mr. Miller ended on measures to tackle poverty and underdevelopment, which can stimulate conflict and also drive up the demand for small arms. He argued that investments in rural and urban regeneration programs could break the link between poverty and gun-related crimes.

He finished by giving the example of Liberia. For 50 years most of the young did not go to school and there is still not electricity in the whole country. When the conference participants arrived they would have noticed the effects of SALW and of conflict, in particular on infrastructure.

Liberia's arms legislation will soon be revised and he hoped that it would promote transparency. He also highlighted the need to ensure secure and safe storage and that the police forces need

training to ensure that their weapons are adequately used. Parliamentarians need also to ensure that security personnel have adequate salaries in order to avoid corruption.

By changing cultures we will reduce the demand for SALW.

The full presentation can be found in attached appendix 3 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

3.2. Debate

A discussion on violent films and violence in the media took place. Some participants argued that films have a significant impact on children as they learn at an early age how to assault and rob. International law and local laws should be passed to limit these films.

Another discussion centred on what can be done about homemade or craft weapons and weapons made for hunting. Some people are dependent on manufacturing arms for their living.

Mr. Weiderud, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW shared the Forum's experiences from working in Latin America. It is of course not possible to only look at the demand—we need to look at the supply side as well. He highlighted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and that parliamentarians must be involved in this process. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to include African States in the process and he therefore encouraged the participants to get their States involved. He also mentioned the clear link between the trade in SALW and drugs. In this supply and demand chain it is necessary to address both sides.

Regarding proper salaries, he gave another Latin American example: the Nicaraguan police is the lowest paid police in the region but also least corrupt. It is not only poverty that leads to corruption, other factors need to be considered. Corruption exists in all levels of society. He stressed that training is key.

The last session of the day was dedicated to group work in order to discuss the Monrovia Declaration. The participants were divided up into working groups which facilitated interactions in an informal manner. The results of the working groups were presented at the final session of the conference and the final declaration adopted.

4. Session IV: Root causes: Gender and violence against women and human rights

The session was dedicated to discussing the relation between gender, violence against women, human rights and SALW. Hon. Muhammadou M5 Jallow, Member of Parliament, The Gambia, facilitated the session and gave a brief introduction.

Women suffer the most from crimes against human rights and gender-based violence - in their homes, in the streets and during conflicts. He highlighted the need to increase the number of women holding decision-making positions and the ratification of the various conventions that help in the development of women, the eradication of gender-based violence and in addressing traditional practices that have a negative impact on women's rights. Domestic violence, often including the use of guns to commit violent acts against women, and issues with securing women's societal rights (marriage, inheritance, etc.) must be addressed.

Women still face discrimination leading to migration and HIV/aids infection, trafficking and other forms of human rights abuse. Parliamentarians must ensure that resources are made available to women as a way to empowering them against poverty and for sustainable development in a secure environment.

4.2. Presentation 1 - Action Aid Liberia

Ms. Catherine Karmo, Policy Manager, ActionAid, Liberia, presented Action Aid, an organization working with poor and marginalized people in 50 countries, focusing on woman's rights. Women's rights are violated based on either direct, structural or cultural power relations within societies. Women's rights are a particular set of freedom that are either institutionalized, or violated based on either direct, structural or cultural power.

She continued by explaining the links between gender, violence against woman and human rights. Power relations between man and women create inequalities; violence against women is gender-based therefore violating the universal standards of human dignity and rights. During armed conflicts women and girls are often raped or used as sex slaves.

After the Liberian civil war, Action Aid started several projects, one of these projects a reintegration and resettlement program for woman and girls since they were most severely affected by the war. The project was designed to give 3,000 women access to primary education and acquire conflict resolution and peace-building skills. So far, 450 women have graduated. Another project focused on the access to justice in post-conflict communities and on enhancing the security and safety of marginalized women in conflict affected communities in Liberia.

Women are often hindered from accessing justice due to culturally-driven patriarchal power structures. Furthermore the general public's understanding of what constitutes violence against women is low. These project have led to a national response in the form of a "Gender Equity in Politics Bill" which is an agenda for supporting gender balance and equal participation of women. The bill is currently in Parliament for adoption. Ms. Karmo finished by recommending that women parliamentarians should be encouraged and that forums should be created to articulate women's issues.

The full presentation can be found in attached appendix 4 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

4.3. Debate

The participants first entered into a debate on whether gender refers to women or both women and men. Most agreed that it referees to the latter but felt that the presentations had focused mostly on the situation of women. Both men and women need to fight gender inequality.

Ms. Karmo explained that ActionAid understand gender to include all masculine and feminine defined roles in society. For instance some societies prohibit the involvement of women in decision-making, which is a violation of their rights. Women and men have different possibilities in life. She also noted that there were only two female parliamentarians participating in the conference.

4.4. Presentation 2, UNREC

Mr. Nicolas Gérard from UNREC gave his presentation on *Gender, Security and the violence against women*.

In the opening paragraph Mr. Gérard identified the meaning of gender and violence against women as detailed in UN conventions. These instruments have two objectives: to realize the equal rights of both sexes and to strengthen women's participation in society. Mr. Gérard continued by highlighting the main problems identified in UN resolutions: the fact that women are victims of violence in conflicts as well as in times of peace. Mr. Gérard highlighted that The UN urges states to take specific measures to protect women from these forms of violence (sexual abuse, force abortion, sexual slavery, rape, etc.) and that these acts have to be condemned, and that more has to be done in prosecuting and punishing actors.

Secondly, women are often neglected when it comes to accessing security discussions, even if women are more and more active in war and conflicts in terms of non-military support. The UN suggest that awareness needs to be raised upon the special needs for women in conflicts and that measures need to be adopted guaranteeing protection and respect for women's rights. To assure a stable security, issues on gender also needs to be discussed in a transversal way.

In finishing, Mr. Gérard highlighted the absence of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes, as a result their needs are often not taken into account. The UN therefore stresses the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping processes and security arrangements. The representation of women needs to be increased at all levels in the institutions for decision-making as well as in the field, where they could serve as, for instance, military observers.

The full presentation can be found in attached appendix 5 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

4.5. Debate

During the debate it was highlighted that women are sometimes each other's enemies and even stigmatize each other. If all women supported other women then we would not need all rules and regulations. For instance, Hon. Rose Abunaw from Cameroon wished that women should support other women running for Parliament.

Many diverse cultures are found in West Africa and we should have a common understanding that women have rights and are not to be used as tools in conflicts and in peaceful societies.

Ms. Karmo responded to Hon. Abunaw's comment by referring to Liberia's first female president. This achievement can be attributed to support from other women. It is vital to promote capable women who can make decisions on behalf of other women. However there is a lot of resistance from both the public and the private and corporate sphere. She continued by saying that many important decisions are made in places which are difficult for women to access, for instance during unofficial meetings taking place late at night. This of course limits female participation.

Hon. Dunah from Liberia continued by saying that Liberia has a range of laws and conventions protecting women but he argued that these instruments could be used against men. For instance the rape law is failing men who sometimes have to wait a long time before they can have a trial. He stated that both men and women were affected by the war but most of the ones who died were

men. He felt that the UN does not have enough programmes aimed specifically targeting men in this regard. The issue of equality must be addressed from both sides.

Another question was raised on how States can move forward to protect women and girls without having ratified the convention of women's rights. Mr. Gérard answered that the convention provides guidelines and states can implement these without the convention being signed.

Regarding a question raised on female genital mutilation and its links to SALW. Mr. Gérard said that while there is no absolute direct link, both are part of a pattern of violence against women. On Dunah's comment, he agreed that we are striving for gender equality but noted that there are enormous inequalities against women and that these gender-based programmes are trying to redress this imbalance. The vast majority of UN programmes are still directed to men as combatants in conflicts.

Ms. Karmo answered the same question by agreeing that she also understood the dynamic. There is a need to work with parliaments and partners. Regarding the comment on rape, the lack of infrastructure and lack of capacity of justice leads to that rape cases stay very long in court. There are also a lot of cases. Other cases such as murder are given priority such as murder cases.

A final comment for the session was made that one possibility could be to legislate gender equality in parliaments.

5. Session V: Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

Facilitator for this session was Hon. Rose Abunaw, Member of Parliament, Cameroon.

5.2. Presentation 1. Mrs. Caesar, Former Deputy President, Liberia DDR Committee

Mrs. Ruth Caesar explained that she was herself a former parliamentarian. Liberia fought a 15 year civil war taking place in 15 political subdivisions, which displaced the entire population. The war was fought in various ways including child soldiers and female combatants and there was a strong ethnic divide. Many wars and conflicts were doing on in the region, including in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea, creating a spill over effect.

During the DDR-process, some 38 000 combatants needed to be disarmed. However, the fact that Rehabilitation, an additional "R" in DDR, was not included in the initial process was an error that could threaten the peace agreements.

When dealing with ex-combatants one must be clear and fair. Stability is threatened when combatants that were to be disarmed get upset and keep the arms and may re-engage in killings. The international community has a huge responsibility when the country is not capable to re-institutionalise itself.

Today there are 17,000 men and women peacekeepers and there is significant donor support. The support for DDR came through the UN Development Programme (UNDP). When the process started, the treatment of combatants was different. In end of 2006, the process had an independent assessment which concluded that rehabilitation and livelihood programmes were needed. The ex-

combatants needed to be trained and funds were made available to have them reapply for the programme. Some 6,000 to 8,000 ex-combatants applied and were trained. However, additional time was needed to complete the programme, as it was clear that premature closure of the programme could have disastrous effects especially since the borders are so porous. In addition to this, four leading NGO's offered psychological help.

Regarding the gender dimension, sensitisation was poor. Many women did not want people to know they took up arms. Mrs. Caesar finished her presentation by saying that an additional R should be added to DDR: Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and *Rehabilitation*.

5.3. Presentation 2. UNREC

Mr. Gérard started out his presentation on "Security system reform (SSR)" by identifying the security system as a coherent cooperation, where the police, the army and others actors are included. SSR is one of the principal activities in promoting peace and stability in the world. In the application of SSR, all states are confronted with three challenges: the need for a clear institutional framework, the need for a stronger supervision and management in the institutions of security and adequate and competent security forces responsible for protecting civilians.

The concept of SSR has certain basic principles. SSR is founded on democratic norms where humans are the main focus, SSR should incorporate development policies and security reforms, strengthen the participation of civilians and adopting a multi-sectoral approach in order to deeper evaluate the civilians needs for security. Despite these principles there are still problems in the SSR, the main challenge being the absence of a coherent strategy for the SSR followed by lack of capacities needed to support the SSR. There is also a need for better communication on the reform between different institutions involved.

To finish, Mr. Gérard presented some solutions for improvement, where he mentioned the construction of certain capacity-building programmes for SSR processes and the strengthening of national capacities for pacification and elaboration of policies. In particular, Parliaments have a significant role to play in SSR in that the oversight of the executive branch and the determination of the security planning of a country needs to be carried out in a context of good governance, and in particular with the participation of parliamentarians. Mr. Gérard finished by pointing out that the SSR and the DDR reforms could be mutually strengthen.

The full presentation can be found in attached appendix 6 and can be downloaded from the Parliamentary Forum's website www.parlforum.org.

5.4. Debate

Restructuring the country after a war is not easy and the entire security sector needs to be rebuilt. After a war the combatants also have to be compensated. They are often scared of not being compensated and concerned about the stigma that societies might attach to them. Governments cannot do this alone and the international community needs to assist countries in this reform process. New policies and institutional frameworks need to be adopted, and the role of parliamentarians cannot be overemphasised.

Some participants asked if Liberia is now safe. To what extent is the conflict resolved? Mrs. Caesar responded that it will take another decade or so to secure Liberia. There are still many SALW in the Mano River basin. Also, some combatants have not come back to benefit from the seconded

phase of the DDR process as mentioned above. Some ex-combatants were initially located in, for example, Côte d'Ivoire and thus do not benefit from the Liberian DDR programmes. Other combatants came from Burkina Faso and Sierral Leone, they were trained in Liberia but then repatriated by the UN to their respective countries and again they cannot benefit from the Liberian DDR programme. When she chaired the gender department in Parliament she went from county to county checking how the process was doing. She used her parliamentary capacity to check the process. She received reports and kept following up on the process.

The interaction between the police and the military are critical for the security of the whole process of SSR.

Mr. Gérard responded on the issue of fighting nepotism and corruption. Reforming the security sector is vital in order to avoid this problem. Consultation with as many actors as possible from different realms is of course not a full proof solution but an action plan telling which persons you shall hire will help come a long way to overcome the problem. It makes it easier to keep checking and there is a method of evaluation. If there are no plans in place, things are done as they always have been done. If we have clear policies we can have oversight, in particular of Parliament, and track progress.

He continued addressing the issue of weak implementation. It is no point putting in place very ambitious policies if they cannot be implemented.

Mrs. Caesar's final note was to highlight that parliamentarians represent the people and they need to get involved and sensitise their people and to work along with their respective governments.

6. Group work II: Exchange on the Monrovia Declaration

The last session of the day was dedicated to group work in order to discuss the Monrovia Declaration. The participants were divided up into smaller working groups which facilitated their interaction in an informal manner. The results of the working groups were presented during the final session of the conference and the Declaration was adopted.

This is a well established and much appreciated working method and has been used during virtually all of the seminars held at regional, sub-regional and inter-regional levels. Usually the declarations focus on actions to be taken.

7. The Monrovia Declaration



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



Inter-parliamentary Conference
1-2 October 2010
Monrovia, Liberia

“Parliamentary Action on Small Arms in West Africa”

Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons
United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)
House of Representatives of Liberia

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE CONTROL OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN THE ECOWAS REGION, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND CAMEROON

We, Parliamentarians from West African states, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon, gathered together with civil society organizations and concerned with the violence and consequences emanating from the proliferation of small arms in the region;

Considering that the circulation of small arms is a destabilizing factor for states and is a threat for peace and security;

Considering the repeated encouragements of the United Nations on the matter of disarmament in Africa;

Considering that the implementation of a small arms policy is of crucial importance for the promotion of collective peace and security;

Considering that the fight against small arms proliferation requires a global coordinated and multi-sector approach;

Considering the political and legal commitments of states to put in place regional and national coordination mechanisms;

Recalling previous recommendations in Bamako and Accra;
agree together to:

1. International Treaties

- Promote the ratification of international and sub-regional instruments on small arms such as the UNODC Firearms Protocol and the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms,
- Encourage the development of further international conventions to address small arms related violence, in particular at UN level,
- Urge West African states, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon to prioritize negotiations towards a comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty, with the strongest possible standards on human rights, prevention of conflict and end user responsibilities.
- Request the inclusion of parliamentarians in national delegations to international or sub-regional conferences for negotiations related to small arms,

2. Improve Parliamentary work on small arms

- Propose legislation or encourage their respective governments to draft and harmonize legislation to integrate and domesticate international and sub-regional instruments on small arms in national legislation,
- Urge their respective parliaments to strengthen the capacities and means of the Defence and Security Committees and their members,
- Make recommendations to their respective governments for the establishment and strengthening of the National Commission on Small Arms, as the principal body responsible for the coordination and implementation of the convention, to allow them to function effectively,
- Be associated as an observer with all the activities of the National Commission on Small Arms,
- Increase the oversight of their respective governments' actions in the area of defence and security by requesting periodic reports on the implementation of national legislation on small arms and the National Plan of Action on small arms,
- Create national chapters of parliamentarians working on small arms issues within each parliament and create an umbrella network for the ECOWAS and WAANSA regions to assist with the creation of these national parliamentarians' networks,

3. Governance and Democratic stability

- Recognize democracy as the only working method to solve disputes within countries and prevent violent conflicts,
- Insist on respect for human rights, the rights of minorities and power sharing as the mechanisms required to ensure the participation of all ethnic, lingual, religious or tribal groups in society,
- Urge governments to eradicate impunity for human rights violations.

4. Culture of peace

- Encourage dialogue and synergies with civil society, including sensitization of public opinion on SALW and the participation of women in peace education,
- Promote dialogue and cooperation between different ethnic, religious or other groups, e.g. interreligious councils,
- Work in parliamentary constituencies to raise awareness among the population on the dangers posed by small arms – possession, bearing, using and trading in SALW,
- Highlight specific small arms and security problems encountered in parliamentary constituencies to the government and the National Commission on Small Arms,

- Urge governments to ensure that traditional practices are carried out in line with human rights standards and conventions,
- Promote the concept of violence prevention in all sectors of society.

5. Gender equality and peace

- Recognize that gender-based violence is used in the region, Africa and around the world as a deliberate and strategic weapon in warfare and that governments must develop mechanisms to prevent violence against women
- Promote equality between women and men in all public and political life,
- Encourage the fulfilment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and 1820 on gender-based violence in conflicts at local, national, regional and international levels,

6. Security Sector Reform

- Contribute to the elaboration of a strategy to reform the security sector,
- Follow up on the implementation of the convention by the executive as well as military and security forces,
- Improve oversight of the security sector by establishing dedicated parliamentary mechanisms,

8. Participant list

Members of Parliament	
West Africa	Country, party and parliamentary committee
Hon. Désiré VODONOU	Benin Foreign affairs, development cooperation and defence and security
Hon. Raoul BIO KANSI	Benin Foreign affairs, development cooperation and defence and security
Hon. Justin SAGUI Y	Benin Forces for an Emerging Benin Foreign affairs, development cooperation and defence and security
Hon. Drissa SANOGO	Burkina Faso African Independence Party Foreign affairs and defence and security
Hon. Nikiébou FANKANI	Burkina Faso Congress for Democracy and Progress Foreign affairs and defence and security
Hon. Sulemana Ibun IDDRISU	Ghana National Democratic Congress Foreign Affairs
Hon. Major (Rtd) Dereck ODURO	Ghana New Patriotic Party Defence and interior
Hon. Vesa GOMES NALUAK	Guinea-Bissau Party for Social Renewal (PRS) President defence and security
Hon. Worlea DUNAH	Liberia
Hon. Kuku DORBOR	Liberia Liberty Party Judiciary, budgetary and Human Rights
Hon. Gabriel SMITH	Liberia Liberty Party Elections
Hon. Moses TANDANPOLIE Sr.	Liberia Civil and Human Rights
Hon. John BALLOUT	Liberia (Senator)
Hon. Maidagi ALLAMBEYE	Niger Democratic and Social Convention -Rahama Political and institutional affairs
Hon. Muhammadou M5 JALLOW	The Gambia Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction APRC Defence and security
Hon. Chero CHAM	The Gambia Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction APRC Education
Hon. Tchiko Koffi Joseph AKODA	Togo Rally of the Togolese People Defence and security

Other African regions	
Hon. Rose ABUNAW	Cameroon Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)
Hon. Jean Michel NINTCHEU	Cameroon The Social Democratic Front
Hon. Raymond LUETE KATEMBO	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU) President Security and defence
Other participants	
Prof. Bonaventure d'OLIVEIRA	National Commission on SALW of Benin
Mr. Edward S. TOGBA	National Commission on SALW of Liberia (LiNCSA)
Mr. Robert MILLER	Secretary General Liberia Action Network on SALW (LANSA)
Ms. Catherine KARMO	Policy Manager, ActionAid, Liberia
Mrs. Ruth CEASAR	Former President of the Liberian DDR Committee
Mr. Nicolas GERARD	Deputy Director, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)
Ms. Koumé Khoudia DIOP	Adviser President of the National Assembly of Senegal
Ms. Vivian DOGBEY	Information Officer Liberia National Commission on SALW (LiNCSA)
Ms. Bennietta JARBO	Administrative Officer Liberia National Commission on SALW (LiNCSA)
Ms. Agnes KORTIMA	Zorzor District Woman Care
Mr. Dominic NARMAH	Consultant Women NGO Secretariat
Mr. Abraham S. KIMBER	Director, Liberia civil and Human Rights Alliance
Mr. William SAYSAY	Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of the Cultural of Peace
Ms. Edwina L. DOE	The Development Initiative of Liberia
Mr. Kofa TORBOR	Executive Director, Liberia United to Expose Hidden Weapons
Mr. Boima GRAY	Liberia Institute for Human Rights and Democracy
Mr. Oliver BEGAN	Center for Democratic Empowerment
Mr. Mandela JERBO	Center for Democratic Development
Mr. Prince Witherspoon	Liberian United to Combat illicit Small Arms
Ms. Katja SVENSSON	DDR Coordinator, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Mr. Peter SVENSSON	Programme Officer, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Mr. Peter WEIDERUD	Secretary General, Parliamentary Forum on SALW
Mrs. Teresa DYBECK	Programme Officer, Parliamentary Forum on SALW
Ms. Charlotte KOUTRAS	Programme Officer, Parliamentary Forum on SALW
Ms. Jannie HORACE	Administrator, House of Representatives of Liberia
Media	
Mr. Julius KANUBAH	Reporter, STAR Radio
Mr. David M. TOGBA	Camera. Love TV
Mr. Eldred THOMAS	Reporter, Radio Veritas

Mr. Baltimore VERDIER	Editor-in-Chief, House of Representatives
Mr. Nimpson TODD	Senior Reporter, Sentima News
Mr. Prince CAROLE	Reproter, Liberia Journal
Mr. Rudolph CABORAH	Sub-editor, Pairut

9. List of appendices

These appendices are either attached to this report or can be found and downloaded from the website of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW www.parlforum.org under ‘latest news’ – ‘Inter-Parliamentary Conference for West Africa’.

Session II: Working with the Executive – National Commissions (NatCom)

1. National Commission of Benin
2. National Commission of Liberia

Session III: Addressing root causes, changing cultures: contribution of parliamentarians

3. Root causes, Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA),

Session IV: Root causes: Gender and violence against women and human rights

4. ActionAid, Liberia
5. UNREC on Gender

Session V: Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

6. UNREC on DDR and SSR