

WEST AFRICAN ACTION NETWORK ON SMALL ARMS

FOUNDATION PROCESS

edited by
CONMANY B. WESSEH and AFI YAKUBU

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Temporary contact addresses of WAANSA:

Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE)
06 BP 397 Abidjan 06 – Côte d'Ivoire
Tel. (225) 22 41 14 21
Fax. (225) 22 44 58 87
Email. cede-reg@afnet.net

Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)
P.O. Box CT 3140
Cantonments
Accra – Ghana
Tel. (233) 24 81 12 91
Fax. (233) 21 81 13 22
Email. fosad_africa@yahoo.com

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1. Introduction

A Further Step Towards Peace

Dr. Christiane Agboton-Johnson¹

This book sets out the different meetings of West African civil society that resulted in the creation of the West African Action Network on Small Arms – WAANSA.

The formation of WAANSA is one further step on the long road to peace and security in West Africa, a sub-region torn by various conflicts in which small arms and light weapons (SALW) play a fatal role. Their number is roughly estimated at eight million in the sub-region and according to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: “Considering the carnage that they have resulted in, small arms and light weapons could be classified as weapons of mass destruction.”²

This initiative is part of a long process begun in the early 1990s by West African political authorities and backed by the international community. Struck by the increase in armed conflicts, many States came to the conclusion that “the ease with which these illicit weapons cross the borders of countries implies an evolution in the concept of ‘National Security’: insecurity is shared threat.”³

*La Flamme de la paix*⁴ in Timbuktu, Mali (March 1996), as well as consultations held with the UN and with regional structures paved the way for a Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa. This has resulted in an initiative that is “not only arms control but rather an international initiative for preventive diplomacy at a regional level.”⁵

At the Oslo Conference in April 1998, the President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konare made a stirring appeal to all African States to take part in the exciting

1. Chair of MALAO/Senegal, member of the Steering Committee of WAANSA.

2. Report of the UN Secretary-General. UN Assembly meeting of 5 September 2000.

3. R. Poulton, I. ag Youssouf and J. Seck, “Collaboration internationale et construction de la paix en Afrique de l’Ouest: l’exemple du Mali.” UNIDIR, February 1999.

4. *La Flamme de la paix*, AMAP.

5. Poulton *et al.*

enterprise of micro disarmament in Africa. He insisted that “We must take together this decisive step to a Moratorium declaration on small arms in Africa, as a contribution from our beloved continent to the global movement of general disarmament for the well-being of future generations.”⁶ Sverre Lodgaard (NISAT)⁷ and Ivor Fung (UNDP)⁸, who attended this meeting, drew attention to the significant role that close collaboration between governments and NGOs could play in the implementation of the Moratorium and the achievement of its goals. The essential role of civil society was therefore acknowledged and emphasised.

The declaration known as the Abuja Moratorium was signed by the Heads of State of the ECOWAS in Nigeria at the end of October 1998. Aside from these significant meetings, some NGOs confirmed their commitment to work with this process of micro disarmament and “to create a West African network in order to support the efforts of the ECOWAS.”⁹ NGOs decided to join politicians in adopting a global approach to the problem since “There could not be any separate solution applicable to each individual nation.”¹⁰

The example of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) reinforced the will of West African NGOs to work together. Until now, NGOs and associations have been more or less successful in raising public awareness of the problem, but there is still much to be done.

WAANSA is an important step forward because this new network is about to become a crucial factor in making civil society’s struggle against SALW both effective and systematic. The initiative will reinforce existing sub-regional structures and strengthen actions aimed at tackling problems associated with SALW, which overwhelm and destroy our societies, prevent us from developing, facilitate the plunder of our resources and deprive us of prospects.

One further step, certainly, but perhaps still a somewhat uncertain or faltering one. It is therefore urgent for WAANSA to consider the issues and challenges it will face in participating in the peace building process.

WAANSA should strive to:

- make the dream a reality, and to contribute to the implementation of the Moratorium and its code of conduct at the level of the political and military

6. Sverre Lodgaard and Carsten F. Ronnfeldt, « A Moratorium on light weapons in West Africa », NISAT/NUPI, May 1998.

7. Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers.

8. United Nations Development Programme.

9. Declaration of African NGOs, Abuja, 1998.

10. Abdel Fatau-Musah and Niobe Thompson, eds. « Over a Barrel : Light Weapons and Human Rights in the Commonwealth », CHRI, London, 1999.

- authorities and all other actors involved (civil society, producers, Wassenaar Agreement countries, ECOWAS, PCASED...);
- set up a truly fruitful partnership between official authorities like the National Commissions and NGOs or organisations active in this field;
 - lead NGOs and civil society in working together in a more harmonious and coordinated manner aimed at achieving real impact and sustainable changes;
 - overcome linguistic divisions in order to focus on the access and dissemination of information;
 - look for partnership with the African Union and the international community.

There are many questions and challenges, whose answers are made up of new small steps still to be taken on an endless road. But here again there is hope, because thanks to WAANSA, West Africa has shown the way by setting up the first regional network in Africa. Let us hope that, with the help of everyone, it will also become the least-armed region in the world.

Our wish is that this book will not just be a compilation of articles, but will also be a leverage tool for civil society actions that promptly lead to an equitable, democratic society, free of illicit small arms and their misuse, in a peaceful and secure West African sub-region where sustainable development prevails.

2. Creating WAANSA A Contribution to Saving Lives and Building Peace¹¹

Conmany B. Wesseh¹²

The initiative to create the Network of organizations committed to addressing the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons arose from the burning necessity to save lives and build peace in the West African sub-region inundated by devastating armed conflicts and violent crime. The Foundation Conference of WAANSA being held in Accra, Ghana, May 20 and 21, 2002 build upon the important consultations held in the last four years, in many parts of the world.

Key among these are :

- The Ecumenical Consultation on Micro disarmament in the Sub-region of West Africa sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA), held in Accra, September 1998;
- The West African NGOs Consultations held in Abuja in the sidelines of the ECOWAS Summit that first declared the Moratorium on the Manufacture, Exportation and Importation of Small Arms, October 1998;
- Consultations held in Bamako, March 1999; in Monrovia, July 2000; in Freetown, 2001; in Accra, June 2001;
- Consultations on small arms among West African participants held during events in Europe and America between 1998 and 2002.

The high points of progress that have been made to date are :

11. From the Introductory Comment delivered at the Foundation Conference of WAANSA, Accra, 20-21 May 2002.

12. Executive Director of the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE, Liberia), Chairman of the Steering Committee of WAANSA.

1) A number of West African organisations were founded with small arms control as an important part of their mandate. Many others have since incorporated the issue in their activities. Some played and are playing important roles in ending violent conflicts in their communities, disarming combatants, promoting reconciliation, and advocating human rights, protecting women and children, and fighting in general for a just and peaceful society.

Two such organisations, the Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE, Liberia) and the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CENCOR, Ghana), participated in the initiative in Orillia, Canada, in August 1998, which resulted in the founding of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). Since its formal launching in May 1999, IANSA has brought to its fore about 400 organisations from every continent. It is now the uncontested leader in civil society work on small arms in the world. CEDE serves on the IANSA Facilitation Committee. Like all participants in the initiative, CEDE and CENCOR undertook to encourage other African participation in networking on small arms issues.

2) The WCC/FECCIWA consultations in Accra brought together predominately Christian faith-based organisations from ten countries, eight of which were West African. They declared their commitment to promote networking on small arms control in West Africa. General Arnold Quainoo, a former Army Commander of Ghana and the first Commander of the West African peace-keeping Force to Liberia, delivered the keynote address.

3) The Abuja consultations which brought together fifteen NGOs from seven West African countries went one step further by deciding to create a network of organisations interested in and working on small arms issues, and by mandating the chair of the meeting – the Executive Director of CEDE – to lead the efforts. A committee was created with the Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE, Liberia), African Strategic Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG, Nigeria), Mouvement national des femmes pour la sauvegarde de la paix et l'unité nationale (Mali), Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (MALAO, Sénégal), and ONG Femme et famille (FEFAM, Niger). The keynote speaker at the meeting was Dr. Amos Sawyer, former President of the Interim Government of Liberia who shared his experience managing the affairs of a country in the throes of a destructive armed conflict among multiple armed groups (1990-94). The delegates at the meeting engaged the ECOWAS Ministerial and Summit meeting at the time to lobby for the declaration of the Moratorium. The meeting delivered a message to the ECOWAS Heads of State.

4) The Bamako Consultations that followed received progress reports on increasing numbers of organisations that were joining the small arms movements and the building of national networks. The Abuja team was encouraged to work as an organizing committee for a West African network and to do so by co-opting more organisations into itself. PCASED was launched in Bamako at the time, and a call for action was made.

5) During the June 2001 informal consultation in Accra, the Organizing Committee was expanded and amended to include the following organisations :

- a) Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE, Liberia) – Conmany B. Wesseh, Chairman/Convenor;
- b) Mouvement national des femmes pour la sauvegarde de la paix et de l'unité nationale (Mali) – Dr Mariam Djibrilla Maïga;
- c) Femme et famille (FEFAM, Niger) – Mariam Bayard Gamatie;
- d) Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA, Ghana) – Afi Yakubu;
- e) Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) – Florella Hazeley;
- f) African Strategic Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG, Nigeria) – Gen. Ishola Williams;
- g) Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) – Baffour Dokyi Amoah;
- h) Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (MALAO, Sénégal) – Dr. Christiane Agboton-Johnson.

This consultation agreed to hold the founding conference of WAANSA in Freetown, Sierra Leone, back-to-back with the Consultation scheduled by the World Council of Churches. At the last minute, the WCC consultations were cancelled, thus affecting the Founding Conference at the time.

In pursuit of the mandate to further explore ways and means to hold the Founding Conference of WAANSA, the Convenor of the Organizing Committee consulted with FOSDA for a joint application to the IANSA to help fund the creation of WAANSA as part of IANSA's regional network-building efforts. The request was granted, thus setting firm grounds for the conference.

The objective of the Conference was set broadly as follows :

1) To approve the Founding Document¹³ containing the objectives of WAANSA and the structures for decision making and implementation.

13. See document in this publication.

- 2) To prepare and adopt the Programme of Action for WAANSA.
- 3) To establish, where appropriate, the leading structures of WAANSA.

In light of the commitment and enthusiasm that I have witnessed while leading this project over the last couple of years, and considering what I have seen since we arrived in Accra, I have no doubt that all of these objectives will be realised.

I cannot conclude these brief remarks without saying that it has been a mighty challenge for us so far. With this in mind, I wish to pay a special tribute to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), which granted us a significant portion of our budgetary requirement. Thanks are also due to International Alert, Oxfam GB and Oxfam America, as well as the Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP, Brussels), without whose support the Founding Conference would not have taken place.

3. Ecumenical Consultation on Micro Disarmament in West Africa

Organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Fellowship of Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT), and hosted by the Christian Council of Ghana.

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Accra, Ghana
28-29 September 1998

1. Preamble

We the participants from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Norway, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo assembled here thank God for this unique opportunity to discuss the problems of proliferation of small arms in the West African sub-region and how best this dangerous trend could be minimised or stopped.

2. Observations

Having observed with concern the proliferation of small arms in the sub region which has caused untold hardship, loss of lives and displacement of innocent people; were horrified by the fact that proliferation of small arms in the sub-region has caused the untimely death of about two million people since 1990. We further note with concern that people in responsible positions in our sub-region are involved in this horrible trade in small arms that has created an increasing wave of wanton destruction of life, banditry and general insecurity.

The root causes, condition and occasions that have necessitated the proliferation of small arms in West Africa and indeed in other regions of Africa are part of the complex socio-political and economic history of the sub-region. This proliferation of small arms has contributed to the destabilization of the state already

weakened by the spate of coup d'Etat, arms insurrections and ethnic conflicts. We note that there is a correlation between undemocratic governance and proliferation of arms in the sub-region. These forces of destabilization have introduced into the society a culture of careless and wanton destruction of life and property. We recognise that although the menace of micro-arms proliferation affects the whole society, the youth are its most visible victims. The presence of abundant small arms and light weapons in the region has become a security issue for our societies. These issues raise human rights questions that include questions about the value of life and the right to move freely without fear. This ultimately affects human development. We however appreciate the positive and constructive initiative taken in the region to control and limit the proliferation of arms by the government and people of Mali.

3. The Responsibilities of the Church

As the people of God in this region, we cannot be silent about this great menace to life and the proper ordering of society. We therefore call on the churches in the sub-region to join hands with other organisations, institutions which share this concern to address this problem which is threatening human life and undermining the conditions for development in our region.

Recommendations

We recommend:

- a) That all ex-combatants who are still in possession of arms should surrender them to the appropriate authorities;
- b) That military spending should be cut to make funds available for necessary social amenities such as Education and Health;
- c) That all churches in the region should support the Malian initiative calling for a moratorium on the manufacture, export, importation and distribution of small and light weapons in the region. In this direction of consultation, we call on FECCIWA to make a formal presentation in support of the Malian initiative at the forthcoming ECOWAS meeting at Abuja in Nigeria at the end of October 1998. We hope that a similar initiative will be adopted by the OAU and also be placed on the Agenda of the WCC Assembly in Harare Zimbabwe in December 1998;
- d) That the churches should make conflict management and resolution an integral part of their mission to the society.

4. West African NGOs Consultation on Small Arms

Hosted by the African Strategic Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG, Nigeria), with the support of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

FINAL DOCUMENT

Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria
29-30 October 1998

1. Introduction

The proliferation and misuse of small arms endanger the security of people and nations. Small Arms are the main weapons used in armed robberies, drug trafficking, gang fighting, intra and inter communal feuds, local wars, terrorism, the gross violation of human rights, subversion of constitutions, and in creating and maintaining a general state of fear and instability. These situations constitute obstacles to sustainable development and durable and genuine peace.

The misuse of small arms leads to serious physical and psychological wounds to large sections of the population, displacement of millions of people, the breaking up of families and communities, the collapse of economies and the destruction of the environment. The net effect is untold human sufferings that make women and children the worst victims.

Conflicts in Africa and especially in the West African sub-region soon take on bloody and uncontrolled proportions because of the accessibility and availability of small arms. It is estimated that of the approximated fifty-five million small arms in circulation in the world, West Africa alone accounts for about eight million.

Conscious therefore of the danger which small arms pose to society, fifteen NGOs from seven West African countries met in Abuja, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, October 29 to 30, 1998 while the 21st Annual Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was in progress. The timing was

meant to dramatise preparedness of civil society to work along with state authorities in tackling the serious problem of small arms.

The consultation benefited immensely from the profound contribution of the Former President of the Interim Government of Liberia (1990-1994) Professor Dr. Amos Sawyer who, in his keynote address, showed the linkage between underdevelopment, lack of democracy and injustice and violent conflicts.

Also making very useful contributions to the consultation were Sverre Lodgaard, Director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Ole Peter Sunde, Director of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) who shared relevant information on international efforts on small arms with particular reference to the Norwegian Initiative and West Africa.

The Advisor of the UNDP Office of Good Governance and Peace Building, Dr Ivor Richard Fung, brought to the consultation the interest and support of the United Nations system, especially the UNDP.

2. Decisions

After a frank and very useful exchange of views, experiences and information, the participants decided to undertake multiple actions against the production/manufacture, distribution, import, export, transfer, flow, proliferation and misuse of small arms in West Africa.

a) West African NGO Network

It was the view of participants that a West African NGO Network should be established on the following terms :

- The network will be a forum for the exchange of information, views, experiences and strategies in combating small arms and their consequences, and in reducing their demand.
- The network should bring together national organisations that are working on or interested in combating small arms.
- To bring into effect the network, there a more representative conference of relevant West African NGOs should be held as soon as possible.
- For the preparation of such a conference and other coordinating activities, the participants agreed to set up a five-member Working Group comprised of: the Campaign for Good Governance (CGG, Sierra Leone), the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE, Liberia), the African Strategic Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG, Nigeria), Mouvement national des femmes pour

la sauvegarde de la paix et l'unité nationale (Mali), and ONG Femme et famille (FEFAM, Niger).

b) The West African Moratorium

Participants discussed, endorsed and adopted the West African Moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms and light weapons that arose from the initiative of President Alpha Oumar Konare of the Republic of Mali.

In a special message to the Heads of State and Government of West African countries meeting in Abuja, the participants welcomed the leaders and highly commended them for their decision to adopt and declare the said Moratorium.

The participants also expressed their profound and warm thanks to the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, and countries and international NGOs with a demonstrated interest in supporting the Moratorium.

Participants undertook to:

- Support and participate in the efforts of their home states in respect of the Moratorium and its effective implementation and monitoring;
- Participate in the drafting of an Action Plan for the fostering of a culture of peace in their respective countries;
- Establish a mechanism for the exchange of information on the issues of small arms with other African and international NGOs; and
- Provide all round support to the efforts of ECOWAS Conflict Management Mechanism and the co-ordination of a concerted program of action on the Moratorium.

c) Action at the national level

Participants undertook to ensure that their national organisations will lead efforts for the creation and development of national constituencies of NGOs on small arms, and will engage in public information, sensitisation and other kinds of activities for the Moratorium and the reduction of demand for small arms.

3. Appreciation

At the end of the consultation, participants expressed appreciation to the following institutions and persons:

- The Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) for their very timely support, which made the consultation possible;
- The UNDP, especially its Governance and Peace Building unit, and the Na-

- tional Offices in West Africa, with particular mention of the Mali Mission for their facilitation and other contributions to the success of the meeting;
- The President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konare, who was recognised in a special way by the consultation for initiating the proposal for a Moratorium and for his commitment to the cause of peace;
 - ECOWAS for adopting and declaring the Moratorium, which is yet another historic landmark paralleling the creation of the West African Peace Keeping Force;
 - The OAU, the UN and the entire international community for their unwavering support for the substance of the Moratorium; and
 - Finally, the African Strategic Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG, Nigeria) for hosting the meeting in Abuja.

Concluded and adopted by the participants on Thursday, 30 October 1998, in Abuja, Nigeria.

For the organisers of the consultative meeting :

Abdulai Bayraytay
Campaign For Good Governance
(Sierra Leone), RAPPORTEUR.

Conmany B. Wesseh
Center For Democratic
Empowerment
(Liberia), CHAIRMAN.

West African NGOs Consultation on Small Arms (continued)

MESSAGE TO THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ECOWAS

Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria
29-30 October 1998

We, participants in the West African NGO consultation on small arms taking place in Abuja, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, held on October 29-30 1998 while the 21st Annual ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) summit is in progress, welcome with great satisfaction the historic adoption and declaration by West African leaders of the Moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons.

The proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons in the sub-region is a threat to peace, security, and stability. Their consequences undermine all conscientious efforts aimed at development, protection and the upholding of human rights and democracy.

With poverty, underdevelopment and injustice among the main causes of conflict in West Africa, the proliferation, use, importation and manufacture of small arms have invariably further aggravated the economic and social problems, particularly among women and children. The use of small arms has exacted untold human suffering in the form of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, the destruction of life and property, and massive human rights violations.

In light of the above, we civil society representatives hereby pledge our unflinching support for the effective implementation and monitoring of the Moratorium, and undertake to collaborate with state authorities in their efforts in this direction.

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While Your Excellencies conscientiously strive for peace and sustainable development in the sub-region, we congratulate you and wish you fruitful deliberations.

Concluded this 30th day of October, 1998, in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

5. West African Civil Society Consultation

Organised with the support of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

A CALL FOR ACTION

A message to the Meeting of Foreign Ministers on the occasion of launching the Program for Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED).

Bamako, Mali
22-23 March 1999

Representatives of 25 civil society groups from eight West African countries met in Bamako, Mali, on 22-23 March 1999 in support of the West African Moratorium on Light Weapons. The consultation reviewed actions taken by civil society in support of disarmament and the creation of a culture of peace, and proposed future measures to speed up the process, which received a monumental boost from the signing of the West African Moratorium in Abuja on 31 October 1998.

The consultation took account of previous civil society meetings held in the region, including: Accra, Ghana in September 1998 with representatives of churches and Christian councils, and Abuja, Nigeria in October 1998 alongside the ECOWAS summit that adopted the Moratorium.

During the consultations, civil society representatives pledged unflinching support for the effective implementation and monitoring of the Moratorium, in collaboration with state authorities.

The Bamako meeting reviewed important plans to raise awareness in support of the Moratorium in many countries and ongoing efforts to create a West African civil society network.

As representatives of civil society, we are witnessing first hand the human suffering caused by uncontrolled proliferation of small arms within our region.

We note that the Moratorium is already five months old. We have no time to lose in implementing the agreement. Nonetheless, we continue to hear disturbing reports that many ECOWAS Member States have not informed their security sectors and other relevant government institutions of the Moratorium as signed by their Head of State. We therefore, on behalf of our communities, urge our governments to :

1. Immediately implement the Moratorium as adopted in Abuja, and promote the priorities and programs of the PCASED.

2. Include civil society groups in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the PCASED programs. The PCASED should share plans and information on a transparent and regular basis.

3. Work with local and national media and civil society groups to make known the content and mechanisms of the Moratorium and the PCASED to the wider communities in our countries.

4. Welcome and encourage civil society plans of action at local, national and regional levels. Traditional and modern civil society, including religious groups, media, business and labour organisations can reach people who are crucial to local work for disarmament and the creation of a culture for peace.

5. Review, establish and harmonise laws and administrative structures to exercise effective control over the ownership, manufacture, import and export of arms. Without such laws and policies, it is impossible to distinguish legal from illegal gun transfers and ownership.

6. Promote research on small arms issues by sub-regional experts in order to identify other mechanisms to promote a culture of peace.

7. Take immediate action to collect and destroy excess weapons. This should be achieved through a mix of development and peace-building approaches. Collected weapons and ammunition must not be recycled, but destroyed. As an important first step, the weapons collected by ECOMOG in conflict areas should be destroyed without delay in conformity with and as a signal of implementation of the Moratorium.

8. Initiate comprehensive security reform, including the training of military, police and customs officers and other security personnel, and undertake other security sector reforms. Civil society groups should be fully involved in this process to ensure that the reforms undertaken are as democratic and responsive to community needs as possible.

9. Ensure stronger controls through cross-border collaboration between com-

munities and security forces, and through better control of mechanisms and equipment at ports and airports.

The participants extend their appreciation to the people and government of Mali for their co-operation in connection with this consultation.

In closing, the participants appreciate the consistent diplomatic, moral and financial support of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT).

West African Civil Society Consultation (continued)

CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT FOR THE PCASED IN WEST AFRICA

Bamako, Mali
22-23 March 1999

On 31 October 1998 governments of West Africa took an historic step, becoming the first in the world to say «enough is enough» and to halt further production, imports and exports of light weapons and small arms for a three year period.

Now the hard part begins: ensuring that governments remember this political commitment, and mobilising international support for the implementation of a Program for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) so that the region will actually experience a reduction of armed violence.

West African civil society – women’s organisations, religious bodies, community groups, business associations, professional associations, etc., – will play a vital role in the successful outcome of these efforts. This paper outlines four priority areas where input, assistance, and in some cases pressure will be most needed.

Establishing a Culture of Peace

The most important role of civil society in regard to the Moratorium and the PCASED is in the development and strengthening of a culture of peace in West African societies.

What, exactly, does the phrase “culture of peace” mean? First and foremost, it means creating a normal standard of behaviour that favours the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and one that stigmatises the use of violence by any part of society. The illegitimate possession and use of small arms, including deadly assault rifles and grenades, would be rendered unacceptable in a culture of peace.

Establishing such a norm in a region experiencing ongoing war and armed violence is, of course, an extremely difficult task. Sceptics will say that with political and civil strife so endemic, the need for weapons will continue to grow and will defeat a culture of peace.

But the Moratorium and implementation of the PCASED provide a window of opportunity for radical change. Despair and apathy now would only ensure that the next generation of West African children will learn the ways of fear and violence.

In the near future, the PCASED staff should be able to assist civil society efforts in promulgating a culture of peace through funding the development of materials for sensitisation campaigns and programs. But as ambitious as it is, the PCASED is a small undertaking compared to the vastness of West Africa. The churches and mosques, civic associations, business communities, artists, educators, journalists and others must do the legwork in spreading information and optimism about the possibilities provided by the Moratorium and the implementation of the PCASED.

The people and organisations gathered at this meeting represent in large part the *crème de la crème* of civil society involvement in West African regional efforts to get guns out of circulation. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to share your expertise and knowledge of the issues of light weapons and sustainable development, and to assist in developing further capacity in the region in support of peace and against guns.

Consider trying to use the mass media – your city’s newspaper, radio or TV station – to educate citizens in your region about armed violence and about efforts to try and reduce it. For instance, submit an essay or opinion article to your local newspaper telling people about this gathering, the establishment of the PCASED, its goals and activities. Introduce yourself to a local radio talk show as a person available to discuss regional efforts to curb weapons proliferation. Another very effective way to get the word out is to persuade your local TV station to broadcast a documentary on the issue of small arms proliferation and control. Both the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfer (NISAT) and the Center for Defense Information (CDI, Washington DC) have recently produced half-hour documentaries on small arms proliferation and control. Other organisations, such as Amnesty International, have produced relevant video programs that they will likely send free of charge. Of course the means available to persons in different countries will vary. The point is, explore your options for getting the word out as widely and as loudly as possible!

In addition to raising the general public's awareness, civil society groups will need to help the PCASED sensitise specific groups, in particular youth. Peace education campaigns should begin at secondary or even primary school levels to reach youth who are both victims of the scourge of guns and victimizers. These initiatives should de-glamorise child warriors and make clear the difficult life ahead for a child who grows up only learning the ways of war.

Successful campaigns around the world share many common features. You might consider how you could incorporate some of the following methods in your advocacy work against weapons proliferation and the culture of violence :

- Build coalitions. Reach out to all groups and organisations that are affected by armed violence – which means everyone.
- Be strategic. Expend the most effort in trying to involve the most powerful and effective segments of civil society in your community – whomever they may be.
- Speak up. Routinely update all groups with which you work, or of which you are a member, about the steps that they could be taking to help combat violence. What you take for granted as common knowledge could be new to most people.
- Continue to build – and to share – your expertise on these issues. There is a growing network of NGOs researching and taking action against small arms and light weapons. The purpose of the International Action Network on Small Arms, which will be formally launched in May 1999, is to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences.

The following intergovernmental and NGOs have been involved in peace training programs, and should willingly assist civil society and the PCASED's efforts to raise "peace consciousness" through the provision of materials and information about others' experiences through similar efforts :

- African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Durban, South Africa;
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa;
- International Alert, London, Great Britain;
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), Geneva, Switzerland;
- World Council of Churches Program on Violence in the Cities, Geneva, Switzerland;
- UNESCO Culture of Peace Program, Paris, France.

Promoting Security Sector Reform

In 1994-95, the UN Secretary-General dispatched an advisory mission to six countries of the region – Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal – to examine weapons proliferation. The mission found that police and customs officers and other security forces in these states lacked modern techniques and skills necessary to deal with the increasing security challenges posed by rapidly growing cities, porous frontiers which allow the free movement of weapons and drugs, and increasing criminality. In addition, inadequately safeguarded weapons storage had permitted widespread theft from security forces’ arsenals. (For instance, in 1993 Mali’s security forces reported the loss of some 2,000 weapons.) As a result, among the mission’s core findings was the need for better training of law and order and border control/customs forces.

Improving the capacity and capability of security forces to combat illegal gun-running and gun use will be a priority for the PCASED. Civil society groups should be fully involved in this process to ensure that the reforms undertaken are as democratic and responsive to community needs as possible. A principal way in which civil society groups can and should be involved is through the development of peace education materials for the forces of law and order and for local communities. These materials would help ensure that police and border forces are aware of the arms import/export Moratorium commitment undertaken by their governments. In addition, such efforts could help educate security forces about other national and international laws relating to arms transfers (such as obligations to enforce UN arms embargoes), respect for internationally recognised standards of human rights, and international humanitarian law.

Much of the PCASED’s work in this area will involve the development of effective regulatory regimes and procedures for border/law and order/customs officials on such issues as monitoring end-user certificates and ensuring compliance with arms embargoes. At airports and ports these procedures might include routine checking of cargo manifests against actual cargo, checking flight plans against flight directions, and noting arrival and departure times and registration numbers of airplanes and ships. The PCASED will also focus on the acquisition of up-to-date equipment needed for detecting illicit shipments of weapons through points of entry or exit, and in support of this goal, the secretariat will likely have to seek some donor country assistance.

The porous nature of borders in the region and the ease with which small arms can be concealed make it necessary for local communities to cooperate closely with police, border guards and customs to prevent gun smuggling. Thus, deve-

loping and improving civil-military and civil-police relations is an extremely important area of work where civil society involvement is vital.

In order to build cooperation between communities and police, there must be regular channels of communication to discuss safety and security with local community representatives. In addition to opening such dialogue, NGOs in West Africa can play a vital role in promoting awareness of good standards of law enforcement and in helping to encourage community policing structures at the local level. Civil society organisations can also work to promote professionalisation and anti-corruption practices in local police, military and customs forces. Corrupt officials at border posts encourage or allow illicit weapon flows for personal gain, while others in the police or military might engage in theft and/or distribution of weapons. With a professional police force in place, NGOs and community groups can work with local police against the common enemy – armed violence.

The following organisations can serve as resources on training programs for security sector reform:

- ACCORD's "Peace in the City" project in Durban, South Africa;
- Amnesty International (see, in particular, Amnesty document "Basic Standards on Human Rights for Police");
- Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI);
- Saferworld report on security sector reform;
- UN Center for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland has a training course for police;
- UN Commission on Crime Prevention in Vienna, Austria has published guidelines for civilian police monitors.

Establishing Laws on Gun Possession and Transfers

In a set of guidelines drawn up in 1996 to curb illicit arms trafficking, the UN Disarmament Commission called on all states to ensure that they have in place an adequate system of national laws, regulations and/or administrative procedures to exercise effective control over arms ownership and over the import and export of arms. Without such laws and policies, it is impossible to separate legal gun transfers and ownership from illegal ones. In most of sub-Saharan Africa the relevant laws and regulations that exist are holdovers from the colonial era and are largely out of tune with the current security and development environment. Many states have no relevant laws in place. The agreement of West African states to abstain from importing and exporting small arms for the next three years

provides even greater impetus for states in the region to enact or revise legislation in this area.

One of the goals might be to enact national laws to ban civilian possession of military-style weapons, as Mali recently did. Another might be for governments to establish or strengthen a national filing system or registry of legally held weapons. In this way, states would begin to build and enhance legislative and policy-making structures that could control both internal and future interstate flows of these weapons.

To the extent possible, states in the region should harmonise national legislation and regulations on civilian possession, use and transfer of light weapons. One practical step they might take is the development of standardised export and import permits and end-user certificates to limit fraudulent transfers after the three-year Moratorium on transfers ends. Harmonization of national legislation and policies would also facilitate the possible future development of a West African regional convention to limit light weapons transfers (again, after the three-year Moratorium ends).

The Inter-American Convention against Illicit Weapons Trafficking negotiated in the Organization of American States in 1997 provides a useful model in this regard. This agreement, together with the ongoing negotiation by the United Nations (ECOSOC) of a global firearms protocol to the convention on trans-national organised crime, demonstrates a growing awareness among state actors around the world of the need for norms and uniform policies to effectively tackle the problem of light weapons proliferation and misuse.

Sceptics might say that reliance on a legal approach is an exercise in idealism, since the most mature legal systems in the world have not been able to stop arms export scandals or gun trafficking. However, an absence of effective law makes trafficking and abuse of light arms all that much easier. Vital to the success of this approach are mechanisms to implement and enforce the law, and the political will to do so. Moreover, establishing the rule of law – not only over weapons ownership and trade but over all facets of society – is vital to the establishment of a culture of peace.

As part of its mandate, the PCASED will call for National Commissions on light weapons issues in each of the ECOWAS members. These commissions will coordinate and develop policies relating to the light weapons Moratorium and the implementation of the PCASED. Governments can and should be encouraged to include representatives of civil society – in particular legal associations – in these commissions.

Other ways in which civil society actors can facilitate work in this area would be to initiate studies of the current laws and procedures in their state concerning light weapons ownership, production, import and export. Civil society groups can also press for the passage of new or reformed legislation or decrees. One way to do so is to organise workshops and training sessions for national legislators to highlight the need for improved national legislation and to sensitise them to the need for harmonization of laws in the region.

Collecting and Destroying Surplus Weapons

A core mission of the PCASED is to help establish a more secure environment – one that would facilitate post-conflict reconstruction – by mopping up excess weapons in Member States through comprehensive voluntary weapons collections programs.

PCASED will employ a mix of development and peace-building approaches to uncover, collect and destroy surplus and illicit weapons. These approaches will likely include amnesties and incentive programs, such as limited weapons buy-back programs or exchanges of weapons for tools or training. Incentives such as cattle, food, equipment and assistance in the creation of small businesses would contribute to reducing unemployment, hunger, idleness and the resort to armed robbery. Preliminary discussions on arms collection efforts have already been initiated with Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Sierra Leone. In Mali a number of weapons are being surrendered through a process of UNDP – supported by inter-communal and trans-border grassroots meetings on reconciliation and security.

The participation of NGOs is vital to promote, and often to initiate, such efforts. For instance, the Christian Council has played a central role in weapons collection efforts in Mozambique, as has the business community in El Salvador, where a “Guns for Goods Program” has collected and destroyed more weapons than the UN managed to do following the Peace Accords in the early 1990s.

Another area for civil society participation is to ensure that regional peace-keeping operations include effective strategies for the control of arms during the peace process. Disarmament has already been at the heart of ECOMOG’s peace-keeping mandate. For instance, 1990’s “Operation Liberty” (Liberia) called for factions to surrender arms and ammunition, as well as to refrain from import and further acquisition.

To ensure that collected weapons are not recycled, groups could press their national governments to commit to the destruction of all collected weapons.

Mali's 1996 *Flamme de la paix* ensured that weapons were permanently taken out of circulation. The destruction of collected weapons was an integral part of the peace agreement, as well as a symbol of local, national and international co-operation and confidence-building.

Conclusion

The above activities show clearly how vital civil society's role is in the success of the Moratorium and the PCASED experiment. Your help will assist Moratorium member states in improving how they distribute, use, store and secure small arms and light weapons so as to minimise theft and misuse. More essentially, though, your support for this effort will lessen the on-the-ground suffering caused daily in West Africa by military-style light weapons, and it will allow states in the region to pursue economic development and post-conflict reconstruction in a more secure environment.

6. All-Africa Civil Society Consultation on Small Arms

Organised by the United Nation Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), with the support of Oxfam GB, the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Alert and the Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP).

AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY DECLARATION ON LIGHT WEAPONS

Lome, Togo
7-9 December 2000

Africa, the cradle of mankind, has been suffering for decades from the uncontrolled proliferation of light weapons. These light weapons feed conflicts and crime, bring distress amid families, harm civilians physically and morally and weaken development efforts.

By putting us at the vanguard of efforts to reduce the proliferation of light weapons, we recognise that economic development in Africa and the success of democratic processes are closely linked to the culture of peace as a factor of security and stability

As members and partners of the African civil society, we pay tribute to the historical Common Position of the African Governments on light weapons, adopted at the Ministerial meeting in Bamako on 1 December 2000.

In particular, we welcome the call for involving civil society at all levels in the struggle against the proliferation of light weapons. We declare our support to the OAU and its Member States to implement this common position in order to face the real needs and hopes of the populations as victims of weapons.

We, members and partners of the African Civil Society, commit ourselves to :

- Support our governments and the OAU to play a leading role at the UN Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in July 2001 and to adopt a realistic plan of action related to an international Code of Conduct on weapons sales, a Convention on arms transfers and an international regulation on marking;
- Work in partnership with the Governments to tackle the essential factors underpinning the demand for weapons in Africa;
- Support women in their involvement for peace and its consolidation;
- Advocate for more restrictive legislations in arms exporting countries through the scrupulous respect of Humanitarian International Law and Human Rights;
- Support the Governments and sub-regional organisations in the enforcement of arms control measures;

We request that African Governments, arms exporting countries and the international community :

- Ensure the transparency and accountability of all arms transfers;
- Reduce the supply, availability and misuse of light weapons in Africa through effective control and prevention measures such as moratoriums and strict legislation in respect of international law;
- Control and sanction local production of arms, ammunitions and recycling of small arms and light weapons;
- Provide vulnerable populations with sustainable, equitable and secure livelihoods in order to reduce the recourse to arms;
- Set up, at short notice as stated in the Declaration of Bamako, executive structures and elaborate clear proceedings to strengthen democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, good governance as well as economic recovery and growth in order to decisively eliminate the demand for weapons on the continent.

We solemnly invite African Governments, the sub-regional organisations and the International Community to support the effective implementation of the present Declaration.

Concluded in Lome on 9 December 2000,
African Civil Society Representatives.

7. Civil Society Consultation on the ECOWAS Moratorium: Beyond the UN 2001 Conference

Organised by the African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR), the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) and the Programme of Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) with the support of MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

ACCRA DECLARATION

Accra, Ghana
7-9 June 2001

We representatives of civil society organisations in Africa and abroad, participating in the “Civil Society Consultations on the ECOWAS Moratorium: Beyond the United Nations 2001 Conference” held in Accra from 7 to 9 June 2001;

Gravely concerned that the global illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and the availability of these instruments of violence in large numbers and beyond the scope of formal security structures, has exacerbated the cycle of armed conflicts, death and instability in the ECOWAS sub-region, in which civilian populations – especially children, women and the elderly – are the major victims;

Recognising that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the ECOWAS sub-region undermines good governance, and in so doing violates fundamental human rights, jeopardises economic development, political stability, social justice and peace;

Concerned about the increasing complexity of the global flow in both licit and illicit small arms and its close linkages with organised crime including the “blood diamond” trade, child trafficking, drug trade and money laundering;

Acknowledging the commitment and support of the international community to the Moratorium;

Reaffirming our understanding and commitment to the ECOWAS “Protocol” on conflict prevention, including the Moratorium, as a concrete and comprehensive regional initiative to come to grips with the problems posed not only by uncontrolled flows of legal weapons but also with the environment in which illegal weapons become readily available and used;

Convinced that ECOWAS Member States bear the primary responsibility to create the political space that will facilitate the partnerships and synergies required for the effective implementation of the Moratorium;

Recognising the efforts of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and the Programme of Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) to improve the implementation of the Moratorium, in particular by forging sustainable partnerships with civil society organisations;

Recognizing the indispensable role of civil society in the implementation of the ECOWAS Moratorium and its Code of Conduct and associated measures;

Recognizing the need to collaborate with other sub-regional initiatives in Africa;

Call on West African Governments to:

- Establish national Commissions where they do not exist, while strengthening existing ones;
- Ensure the full participation of civil society in the national commissions;
- Renew the Moratorium;
- Strengthen their delegations by including civil society experts in the United Nations conference in July;
- Organise weapons destruction ceremonies during the course of the United Nations conference on small arms;

Call on the United Nations system to:

- Pursue and strengthen its political, technical and financial support to the Moratorium;
- Declare the illicit trade in SALW as a “crime against humanity”, punishable by law;
- Adopt a Convention on arms transfers;
- Adopt an international regime for the marking of arms;

Call on the international community to continue providing technical, political and financial support for the Moratorium. (Accra, 9 June 2001)

Civil Society Consultation on the ECOWAS Moratorium: Beyond the UN 2001 Conference (continued)

ACTIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Accra, Ghana
7-9 June 2001

1. Building networks on small arms, especially for the promotion of the West African Moratorium at the Community, national, sub-regional and regional level. In this connection, call for support for the ongoing efforts to establish a West African action network on small arms, agreed by civil society organisations (CSOs) in Abuja (October 1998) and Bamako (March 1999).

2. Organisations should include, where they have not already done so, small arms on their mandates and agendas.

3. Disseminate information to raise public awareness of the Moratorium (newspapers, radio, television, and in as many local languages as possible).

4. Send letters to Heads of State and Government, Foreign Ministers and Security Ministers about the renewal of the Moratorium.

5. Establish various forms of contact with Governments for the purpose of influencing them to respect the declaration and take other positive steps to control the flow of small arms and light weapons.

6. Destroy all arms collected or seized from, or surrendered or abandoned by, armed rebels, bandits, criminal gangs, etc., as well as surplus weapons in state armouries.

7. Research, document and advocate good governance, and research and document the reasons for the demand for small arms; take concrete action to address this demand.

8. Create National Commissions, where they do not yet exist, and strengthen existing ones through the involvement of CSO representatives nominated by networks of CSOs working on these issues.

9. Protect, express concrete solidarity with, and provide support to organisations and individuals working on small arms issues, whose lives may be threatened on account of their activities.

8. Founding Conference of WAANSA

Convened by the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) and hosted by the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA), with support of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), International Alert, Oxfam GB and America and the Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP).

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By Lt-General Emmanuel Erskine¹⁴
Accra, Ghana
20-21 May 2002

It is my privilege to deliver the keynote address at this Founding Conference of the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), which is being held today in our historic and pleasant city, Accra.

Why historical? Accra has been the breeding ground of many of our struggles in this continent, be they struggles for independence, or against weapons of war.

It was in Accra that the first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah initiated the campaign against the testing of nuclear weapons in the Sahara Desert. It was also in Accra that the seed of the Non-Aligned Movement was sown, after which the founding conference took place in Bandung, Indonesia.

Accra hosted the 1999 meeting of Christian organisations from the sub-region, which resulted in the Accra Declaration on Small Arms.¹⁵ In June 2001, West African civil society organisations met here and demanded the renewal of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Barely a month after the Accra consultation, civil society organisations across the sub-region succeeded in convincing a num-

14. Former UNIFIL Commander and Chairman of the Ghana Action Network on Small Arms (GHANSA).

15. See « The Ecumenical Consultation on Micro Disarmament in the Sub Region of West Africa » in this publication.

ber of West African governments to destroy weapons to mark the opening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The Government of Ghana also took part in this symbolic and progressive gesture by destroying almost 900 small arms that had been acquired illicitly by non-state actors.

Today, the governments and people of the entire West African sub-region acknowledge with pride the tireless efforts made by civil society organisations across the region to control the proliferation of illicit weapons. We also acknowledge the sustained support of our friends in Europe for this campaign against small arms. We have noticed an increase in awareness of the dangers associated with the diffusion of small arms thanks to the efforts of civil society.

I have personally followed, with keen interest, the numerous activities and programmes organised by civil society to combat small arms since the establishment of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). I am also personally impressed by the important platform you created at the United Nations Conference in New York in July 2001 and the positive impact it has had, especially on defence expenditures. Here in Ghana, the Government's efforts to combat small arms proliferation have been impressively complemented by NGOs. The establishment of the Ghana Action Network on Small Arms (GHANSA), with competent people behind it, can only succeed

Mr Chairman, there is no standard definition of small arms. According to the report of the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, small arms and light weapons range from clubs, knives and machetes to those weapons whose calibre is just below those covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, irrespective of the classification given to these weapons, they are still "tools of death" – as the founding document of IANSA puts it. According to the United Nations, there are some 550 million small arms in circulation globally; in Africa, there are some 100 million and in the West African sub-region some 8 million. In Ghana, it is estimated that there are approximately 40,000 small arms outside the control of the State. According to the current edition of the *Brown Journal*, there are some one million small arms in the hands of non-state actors in Nigeria.

The United Nations has succeeded in destroying thousands of weapons in the Mano River Basin of Liberia and Sierra Leone; but even there, thousands more remain in unauthorised hands. This is unacceptable. Only states and states alone should and must control small arms in the interest of their people. Weapons in

the hands of non-state actors are dangerous and contribute to the worsening of the precarious human security situation in Africa and, indeed, globally.

Since the end of the Cold War, increased armed violence has led to the death of millions of people globally: in the Great Lakes region of Africa, more than two million people have died in Eastern Congo, more specifically in the North and South Kivu regions; in Burundi, the killing of civilians continues unabated despite the tremendous effort by former South African President Nelson Mandela under the auspices of the Nyerere Foundation in Dar es Salaam. In Northern Uganda, specifically in the Kitgu and Goulu districts, the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) has reduced the once rich cotton growing districts to abject poverty with the systematic killing of women, children and the elderly.

In the Mano River Basin states of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, in the numerous conflicts in Nigeria and Northern Ghana, in Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Casamance in Southern Senegal, and in several other areas of West Africa, small arms and light weapons have led to the massive:

- Destruction of lives and property;
- Destruction of public services and utilities;
- Destruction of the economic base of the society;
- Destruction of families, some of whom become refugees in neighbouring countries and generally;
- Suffering of the people.

Even though small arms do not, by themselves, cause conflicts, their ready availability has resulted in the prolongation of armed conflicts, interethnic civil wars and armed violence, including robberies. This affront must be fought with the active support of civil society. The concept of security has moved far beyond traditional concepts of regime or state security; we now talk of human security. This means that governments and civil society must work together to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Governments and civil society must work to implement the United Nations Programme of Action (UNPoA), which is the plan adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July last year, which was attended by several delegates present here this morning.

Mr Chairman, it is heartening that the International Community, in particular the United Nations and the Western World, is becoming acutely aware of the scourge of small arms and light weapons proliferation. It is even more heartening that Africa, the major battle ground where small arms constitute the principal conventional weapon in use, is waking up to the problem and establishing mech-

anisms to help curb the proliferation, ready availability and illicit flow of these weapons.

However, Mr Chairman, with our extensive, porous, and contiguous borders, which facilitate illicit transfers of small arms, it is almost impossible for each state to effectively control its own borders. The need to tackle this security problem within a sub-regional arrangement becomes imperative.

The Ghana National Action Network on Small Arms (GHANSA) has been established as an internal component of our dynamic civil society to combat this scourge. GHANSA will be joining hands and networking with international, sub-regional and other national bodies to help curb the diffusion of small arms in Ghana and the ECOWAS sub-region.

This Founding Conference, which FOSDA is hosting, will have the principal objective of exploring ways and means of establishing a West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA), which will constitute an active part of any sub-regional arrangement.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, for civil society (including GHANSA and WAANSA) to be effective in their operational activities in taking measures to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, it will require the active support, cooperation and encouragement of our governments. Governments can demonstrate their political goodwill by:

- Reviewing their respective national laws governing the acquisition, possession, ownership and use of Small Arms and Light Weapons; and
- Through the strict application of these laws.

I would like to seize this rare opportunity to appeal to our governments to respect and honour the provisions set out in the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which our leaders themselves have signed.

As far as I am aware – and I stand to be corrected – the ECOWAS Moratorium is the only existing convention on small arms and light weapons, and that makes it unique.

It is interesting to note that the United Nations, the primary responsibility of which is the maintenance of international peace and security (Art I, Chapter I of the UN Charter), only began to address the issue of small arms and light weapons in the mid-1990s. Until that time, the UN only spoke of disarmament in relation to weapons of mass destruction (i.e. nuclear, chemical and biological weapons). Therefore, even to the UN the issue of small arms is relatively new. Thus, while

progress in the implementation of some of the Moratorium provisions has been slow, we must keep up pressure on our governments to respect and honour the conventions which they themselves have initiated and signed. We owe it to ourselves to honour and cherish this unique convention – the ECOWAS Moratorium.

I call upon GHANSA and the West African Action Network to support ECOWAS and the United Nations Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) to ensure that substantial progress in its implementation is made by the time it comes up for its next renewal.

Mr Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentleman, it is now my singular honour and pleasure to declare the Foundation Conference for the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) open.

I wish you a highly successful conference.

Thank you.

Founding Conference of WAANSA (continued)

WAANSA FOUNDING DOCUMENT

Accra, Ghana
20-21 May 2002

I. Introduction

The proliferation, availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons endanger the security of people, communities and nations, and West Africa is no exception. Small arms are the main weapons used in armed robberies, intra- and inter-communal feuds, local wars, armed insurrections, armed rebel activities and terrorism. They are used to facilitate drug trafficking, smuggling, and other such crimes. Small arms and light weapons are 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.

The misuse of small arms and light weapons produces catastrophic results, such as inflicting serious physical and psychological wounds on large sections of the population, internally displacing millions of people, condemning several million others to refugee status, breaking up families and communities, and destroying economies and the environment. The net effect is untold human suffering, excruciating poverty, chronic underdevelopment, increased violent conflicts and the absence of peace.

Conflicts in Africa, especially those in the West African sub-region, escalate to bloody and uncontrolled proportions because of the easy accessibility and availability of small arms. The problem posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons involves the demand for and supply of weapons.

Demand in West Africa is provoked by bad governance, insecurity and poverty. Small arms are supplied mainly by external sources motivated by profit, greed and the desire to dominate.

Whatever the reasons for the supply and the demand, small arms and light weapons kill people, destroy property, and cause incalculable human suffering.

Every country in the West African sub-region has experienced armed conflict in one form or another, and small arms were always the weapon of choice. It is estimated that of the more than 550 million small arms in circulation in the world, West Africa alone accounts for about eight million.

The world has awakened to the danger of this menace, and Africa has taken a stand. West Africa has chosen to act, with West African political leaders taking the first step by declaring a Moratorium on the Manufacture, Exportation and Importation of small arms in October 1998, and by renewing this Moratorium for another three years in October 2001.

Civil society in Africa, and in particular West Africa, has had no choice but to make the control of small arms and light weapons an important part of their individual and collective mandates. Civil society organisations working in all spheres are cooperating and collaborating to save lives by combating small arms proliferation and violent conflicts.

Since 1998, many organisations have been consulting with one another to build a network to make their work more effective. Key consultations have included :

- The Ecumenical Consultation on Micro disarmament in the Sub-region of West Africa, organised by the World Council of Churches, Norwegian Church Aid/Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NCA/NISAT) and Fellowship of Councils of Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA), held in Accra, September 1998;
- The West African NGO Consultations held with the support of NISAT and the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Abuja, in the side-lines of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Summit that first declared the Moratorium on the Manufacture, Exportation and Importation of Small Arms, in October 1998;
- The consultations held during the launch of the Programme for Co-ordination for Assistance on Security and Development (PCASED), in Bamako, March 1999;
- The Workshop on Private Military Intervention and Arms Proliferation in Conflicts in Africa, organised by the Centre for Democracy and Development, Center for Democratic Empowerment, Campaign for Good Governance and African Strategic and Security Research Group, held in Monrovia, July 2000;

- The Consultation on Small Arms organised by the UNREC in Lome, December 2000;
- The Consultations on Small Arms organised by PCASED, the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa, and ASDR in Accra, June 2001;
- And the numerous other consultations on small arms held among West African participants, and other events held in Europe and America since 1998.

A number of West African civil society organisations were part of efforts to establish the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and are now members of and active participants in IANSA. They are interacting with governments to stop the illicit trade and flow in small arms and light weapons. Realising that effective work on small arms control can be done through cooperation and solidarity, the organisations have deemed it necessary and urgent to create a sub-regional network on small arms.

II. Name

The name of the network of civil society organisations that are cooperating to stem small arms proliferation and save lives shall be the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA).

III. Vision

WAANSA's vision shall be for the people to live in a just, equitable, democratic, safe and peaceful West African sub-region, free from illicit small arms and their misuse.

IV. Mission

WAANSA will serve as a collaborative civil society instrument for non-proliferation and against the illicit manufacture, trade, circulation and use of small arms and light weapons in West Africa.

V. Objectives

The objectives of the network shall be :

- a) to serve as a forum for the exchange of information, views, experiences and strategies in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa;
- b) to work for the reduction of demand for small arms and light weapons in West Africa;

- c) to be a source of solidarity among all those who work on small arms issues and may be affected as a result of their work or who may be victims of small arms.

VI. Membership of the network

Membership in WAANSA shall be open to the following, who may subscribe to the vision and mission of WAANSA :

- a) National civil society organisations;
- b) National networks or coalitions of civil society organisations;
- c) Sub-regional networks or coalitions of civil society organisations;
- d) Experts, civil and political leaders, popular and outstanding figures, celebrities in athletics, arts and culture, and other fields as agreed by the Steering Committee of WAANSA.

Associate membership shall be open to organisations which may not necessarily be working on small arms but which may identify with the vision of WAANSA.

Honorary membership shall be bestowed upon influential and distinguished personalities by the Steering Committee.

VII. Nature of the network

WAANSA shall be a loose network of organisations and, where necessary, individuals bound together to save lives. Each organisation shall maintain its proper identity and shall work only on those programs it so wishes and in policy areas it supports, provided that its work is consistent with the vision and mission of WAANSA.

VIII. Structure of the network

The decision-making and implementation structures of WAANSA shall be as follows:

- 1. General Conference:** This organ shall be the highest policy-making body of the network. It shall elect members of the network's Steering Committee and review its work. The Conference shall be held annually and shall be attended by members, associate members and honorary members of WAANSA, as well as others invited by the Steering Committee.
- 2. Steering Committee:** This shall be the second highest organ of the network. It will be responsible for making decisions between General Confe-

rences and shall ensure the smooth operation of the network. It shall appoint the principal officers of the Secretariat, review the work of the Secretariat, ensure its proper functioning and approve the budget of WAANSA. The Steering Committee shall be comprised of individuals representing organisations that are part of national networks or sub-regional networks. Not more than one person from national organisations or networks of the same country and not more than one person from a sub-regional network shall be elected to the Steering Committee. Unless otherwise decided by the General Conference, there shall be nine members on the Steering Committee to be headed by a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. The term of office for each member of the steering committee shall be two years, renewable only once. The Steering Committee shall meet in ordinary sessions every six months.

- 3. The Secretariat:** This organ shall implement the decisions of the General Conference and the Steering Committee. It shall be built incrementally by the Steering Committee based on need and resource availability. The Steering Committee shall determine the processes for the creation of the Secretariat as well as the human and material requirements for its proper functioning. Until the Secretariat is fully created, the Chairman of the Steering Committee shall carry out Secretariat functions with the assistance of members of the Steering Committee as may be deemed necessary.
- 4. Advisory Council:** This body shall advise the Steering Committee on policy matters and its members shall promote the work of the network according to their individual preferences and abilities. It shall be made up of distinguished personalities as may be determined by the Steering Committee.

IX. Location of the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall be hosted by a national network member of WAANSA. The head of the Secretariat shall be appointed by the Steering Committee from a country other than the host country of the Secretariat. The Steering Committee shall recommend an appropriate location for the Secretariat to the General Conference for final decision.

Adopted on 21 May 2002 at the Founding Conference of the West African Action Network on Small Arms, held in Accra, Ghana.

Founding Conference of WAANSA (continued)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Accra, Ghana
20-21 May 2002

We, 54 representatives of West African national and sub-regional civil society organisations from ten countries¹⁷ and observers from international organisations and the Government of Ghana, participating in the Founding Conference of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms, held in Accra, Ghana, at the Royal Ravico Hotel, Nungua on 20 and 21 May 2002;

Extremely concerned about the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which endanger the security of people, communities and nations in the West African sub-region;

Recognizing that the illicit trade in and easy access to and availability of small arms and light weapons continue to exacerbate the conflicts and insecurity in the region;

Aware of the relationship between illicit small arms and light weapons on the one hand, and political instability, the violation of fundamental human rights, economic under-development, bad governance, social injustice, criminality and violence on the other hand, and how these negatively impact on the entire society particularly on the survival and protection of women and vulnerable groups such as children, people with disabilities and the elderly;

Reaffirming our understanding and appreciation of the fact that ECOWAS Member States bear the primary responsibility for peace and security in the sub-region;

17. Ten of the fifteen member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) represented were : Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Togo. Delegates from Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea, Niger and Sierra Leone could not attend due to communication, travel and other difficulties. However, most have been part of previous consultations and support the initiative.

Convinced that the ECOWAS Moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of small arms and light weapons within the sub-region is the major regional initiative for dealing with the scourge of small arms and light weapons;

Committed to supporting the Bamako Declaration, the UN Plan of Action on Small Arms and other relevant international instruments;

Conscious of the need for collaborative civil society actions on the non-proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons;

Appreciating the existence and role of the International Action Network on Small Arms as the leading international civil society network on small arms;

Hereby decide to:

Establish the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) to address the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in order to ensure that the West African sub-region becomes a just, equitable, democratic, safe and peaceful place, free of illicit small arms and light weapons and their misuse;

Transform the Organizing Committee of the Foundation Conference plus one other participant into a nine-member Steering Committee that shall manage the affairs of the Network during the next two years. The Membership of the Steering Committee shall be:

1. Center for Democratic Empowerment (Liberia) – *Mr Conmany B. Wesseh* (Chairman)
2. Mouvement national des femmes pour la sauvegarde de la paix et de l'unité nationale (Mali) – *Dr Mariam Maïga Djibrilla* (Vice-Chair)
3. African Strategic and Peace Research Group (Nigeria) – *General Ishola Williams* (rtd)
4. ALTERNAG (Guinea Bissau) – *Mr Adelino Handem*¹⁸
5. Council of Churches in Sierra Leone – *Mrs Florella Hazeley*
6. Foundation for Security and Development (Ghana) – *Ms Afi Yakubu*
7. Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (Senegal) – *Dr Christiane Agboton-Johnson*
8. Femmes et famille (Niger) – *Ms Mariam Bayard Gamatie*
9. Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa – *Baffour D. Amoah*;

Encourage organisations in every country in West Africa to join WAANSA and become active participants as well as joining and actively participating in

18. ALTERNAG is the newest member of the Steering Committee.

FOUNDING CONFERENCE OF WAANSA

IANSAs for the effectiveness of the Networks at the global and sub-regional and national levels;

Express deep thanks and appreciation to the Ghana Government through its Minister of Defence for the interest and support manifested by their representation at the Conference by the Deputy Minister who launched WAANSA; the International Action Network on Small Arms, International Alert, Oxfam GB and America and GRIP (Belgium) for their support; the Organizing Committee for their tireless work; the Center for Democratic Empowerment for convening the Conference; and the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa for hosting the Conference.

Done on 21 May 2002 in Accra, Ghana.

Founding Conference of WAANSA (continued)

LAUNCHING STATEMENT

By Honourable Deputy Minister of Defence, Eddie Akita¹⁶
Accra, Ghana
20-21 May 2002

It is my pleasure to be with you on this important occasion, the Founding Conference of the West Africa Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA). I am also delighted to take the chair for such a momentous event – a meeting to chart a path towards the elimination of unwanted weapons in our sub-region.

Indeed, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa and in Ghana in particular is of concern to my Government. Ever since my Government came into office, we have been inundated with various degrees of arms-related crimes, ranging from sophisticated armed robberies to domestic violence (or what we have dubbed in Ghana “spousal killings”). We are resolved to rid our country of illicit weapons using the best possible legislation at our disposal. I say this as a committed member of the ECOWAS family.

We need the co-operation of other Member States in our fight against the illicit proliferation of small arms. We have a unique guiding document in the ECOWAS Moratorium and its code of conduct. We need to further empower it by respecting and recognising its importance to the promotion of peace and development in the sub-region.

The Government of Ghana is therefore committed to ensuring that our peoples develop in an environment free of anti-social armed groups. We are fully committed to dealing with this issue within the rule of law and within the framework of regional security.

I believe that you have had a fruitful deliberation over the last two days. I also believe that this has not been one of those talk shops that we are beginning to get

16. Government of Ghana.

used to. I am exceedingly delighted that I have the opportunity to close whatever was started yesterday. I have been informed that very useful deliberations have taken place and for this I am excited. I have also been told that the level of participation was very high, and I sincerely believe that you must be commended.

Yesterday WAANSA began its work and I believe that we can already call it a success. The birth of WAANSA is an indication that what was started a couple of years ago is beginning to become firmly rooted in the sub-region. The menace of the proliferation of small arms in West Africa and the sub-region in particular cannot be over-emphasised. The consequences of the misuse of small arms is known to all of us; about 8 million small arms are in circulation in West Africa alone.

Mes amis, my friends, this issue is really alarming, and the more networks such as PCASED, WAANSA, and GHANSA we have, the better it would be for the whole world. It is always better to sit and talk through issues, as we have been doing here, than to resort to other means. When ECOMOG was first launched, it was considered a novelty. All kind of things were said about it, but the rest of the world has since learned a lot from us.

The government of Ghana pledges its full support to WAANSA. Your Final Communiqué will be studied thoroughly and brought to bear on governmental directives.

To symbolically declare WAANSA launched, I ask that you stand and join me.

It is now my singular honour, with your support, to declare WAANSA formally launched.

It is our duty now to go to our respective countries and spread the message gently. Our leaders should be our focus. Once they are on board, the rest will be easy. Thank you so much for all your effort and I wish you a safe journey to your respective countries.

9. Appendix



What is IANSA?

IANSA is an international network of over 340 organisations from 71 countries working to prevent the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. It was set up in 1998 at an international NGO meeting in Orillia, Canada, and was officially launched at the Hague Appeal for Peace in the Netherlands in May 1999. The network helps co-ordinate activities and campaigns by bringing together a wide range of organisations such as human rights groups, relief and development agencies, gun control groups, and religious and public health groups. IANSA also provides a framework within which organisations can learn from and support each other.

NGOs have long been concerned with the effects of light weapons proliferation, and their experience and analysis has already played a role in shaping the international agenda. Although governments have signed up for a number of regional conventions and programmes, practical action is lagging, and much remains to be done. The international NGO community believes that a coordinated, independent effort – both to support and challenge the limits of governmental action on small arms – is essential to enhance human security and promote effective action to curb the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

What are IANSA's aims?

The aim of IANSA is to save lives and stop gun violence. There are many wideranging objectives laid down in IANSA's Founding Document, from the reduction of demand to the stemming of supply of small arms by civilians and governments. Objectives include the ending of illegal trade, the reduction of the quantity of guns in circulation and the reversal of cultures of violence. Participants work in a number of areas, such as community action and disarmament, re-integration of former combatants into society, campaigning and advocacy work, community development, police reform, and public education schemes to tackle

gun violence and raise a-wareness of the impact of small arms. See IANSA's Founding Document.

IANSA is a participatory Network driven by the needs and priorities of its participants. No geographical region or single aspect of the small arms problem is prioritised above others. IANSA does not represent organisations, but facilitates co-operation and communication between them. As the network is made up of such a diverse range of organisations, no single organisation may speak on behalf of IANSA. The Network functions to a large degree on mutual respect and trust, aiming for transparency in the operation of the Secretariat and governing bodies.

The IANSA General Meeting on 15 July 2001 illustrated the importance of bringing together network participants for review and evaluation of the Network, its activities and future planning. It served to reinforce the strategic direction the Network is taking and provide added impetus to its work.

What is the structure of IANSA?

Based on the discussions at this General Meeting, the Facilitation Committee, which is responsible for the management of the Network, decided upon a more representative structure at their recent meeting in October 2001. A new Steering Committee (SC) of 22 members, including 16 regional and 3 thematic representatives, will replace the Reference Group and Facilitation Committee. There will be a rotating elective process, which will ensure that one-third of the SC changes each year, and no single organisation is on the SC for more than 2 years. This new body will be the central decision-making body, leading the network and giving it political and programme direction. There will be a Conference of IANSA every 3 years, which will be open to all participants. The first SC meeting will be in September 2002, and the first Conference of IANSA will take place in December 2002.

At present the secretariat is based in the Christian Aid offices in London and staffed by a Co-ordinator and an Administrative Officer. At the General Meeting of 15 July participants indicated that decentralisation was key to IANSA's success. There are plans to decentralise the secretariat. In the next few months, IANSA will be appointing a Director, an Information Officer and two part-time regional staff, with more regional staff joining the team in 2002. Devolving responsibilities to the regions will strengthen existing networks and help build new ones. Vital to this operation will be the maintenance of efficient co-ordination and communication between the global and regional secretariat.

What has been achieved so far?

Through the efforts of IANSA participants, networks are emerging in Europe, North America, Central and South America, West and East Africa, as well as South Asia and South East Asia. IANSA has been involved in some high profile activities, such as symbolic and real destructions of illegally seized weapons. IANSA launched its position paper for the UN Conference “Focusing Attention on Small Arms - Opportunities for the UN Conference” in January 2001. It is based on the IANSA Founding Document and the results of questionnaires distributed throughout the Network.

The Network publishes regular newsletters, and the website at *www.iansa.org* has up-to-date information on small arms work by participants in different parts of the world, as well as press releases, official documents and publications. It is recognised that information flows need to improve in quantity and quality, which includes translating all basic materials and key web pages into Spanish and French, producing “easy to read” information about small arms, and informing participants of how they can share more information with each other.

Nearly 200 NGOs attended the UN Conference in July. IANSA played a leading role in mobilising NGO participation throughout the UN Conference process. Each Preparatory Committee saw an increasing presence of non-government organisations and greater diversity of events organised by participants. IANSA financially assisted 26 participants from gun-affected countries to attend the Second or Third Prep Com and the UN Conference itself. The Network consistently called for comprehensive measures that participants believed would make a real difference in combating small arms spread and misuse. Each day of the Conference was devoted to a different issue or geographic region and workshops and events were organised accordingly. Delegations now recognise IANSA as a major NGO Network possessing the valuable expertise and experience needed to help tackle the global problem of small arms. See 2001 UN Conference page.

Future Plans

Coinciding with the growth of national, sub-regional and regional networks, thematic groups on different aspects of small arms will be established. These groups or regional networks will share best practice through South-South linking, organise seminars and generate campaigning action. IANSA is based on grass-roots action and participation, and incremental change at the local and regional

levels will serve to inform global action. It is important that these global initiatives are relevant to participants on the ground, and in turn provide their work with an international context. Network participants will also work with groups of like-minded governments at national, regional and international level.

Over the next five years we aim to build a global movement of over 1,000 NGOs working in the area of human security to stop gun violence and protect lives. The message will emphasise the devastating human suffering caused by small arms and highlight the links between supply and demand. IANSA would be nothing without those who participate in it, and interaction is key. We can learn about different aspects of small arms and strengthen each other's capacity to advocate, campaign and raise public awareness. Besides regional and thematic campaigns at local, regional and international level, each year IANSA will organise a Week of Action at the beginning of July to raise public awareness, reach out to new civil society groups and extend the network into new regions.

Founding Conference of the WAANSA

APPENDIX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

20-21 May 2002

NAME/ NOM	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS/ ADRESSE	E-MAIL/ COURRIEL	TELEPHONE / FAX
GAMBIA Joof Emmanuel	Coalition of Human Rights Defenders	49 Garba Jahumpa Road Bakau, KMSD - Gambia	ejoof@hotmail.com asid@gamrel.gm	Tel: (220) 90 65 42 Fax: (220) 49 41 40
Lewis Sheik E. T.	International Society for Human Rights	P. M. B 457 Serekunda - Gambia	amblewisset@hotmail.com socialatletigam@hotmail.com	Tel: (220) 39 50 39 Tel: (220) 37 19 10 Fax: (220) 397 995
GHANA Yakubu Afi	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)	P.O. Box CT 3140 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	fosad_africa@yahoo.com	Tel: (233) 24 28 93 20 Tel: (233) 21 81 12 91 Fax: (233) 21 81 13 22
Gayvolor Abel	GIS	P.O. Box 667 Accra - Ghana	sumoyaya@yahoo.com	
Montia Amina	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)	P.O. Box CT 3140 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	aminbila@yahoo.com	Tel: (233) 021 50 73 63 Tel: (233) 202 11 30 45 Fax: (233) 21 50 73 63

Sumani Alhaji Abubakari	Member of the Parliament Parliament House	Osu – Accra - Ghana	Cell: (233) 020201 73 10
Dzineku Augustine K.	Ministry of Immigration Immigration Headquarters	Accra - Ghana	Tel: (224) 445 22 16 67 adzineku@yahoo.com
Amoah Baffour D.	Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA)	c/o P.O. Box CT 4317 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 77 95 03 Fax: (233) 21 77 95 04 cmid@africaonline.com.gh
Brownell Bah-Wah	SHIFSD	P.O. Box CT 1068 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 24 27 96 70 Tel: (233) 24 37 11 08 shifsd@yahoo.com
Braimah R. Farouk	CEPIL	P.O. Box AN 19452 Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 76 99 98 cepil@ighmil.com
Baiden Bernice	British Council	P.O. Box GP 771 Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 24 47 44 Fax: (233) 21 24 03 30 chri@britishcouncil.org.gh www.humanrightinitiative.org
Sackey Robert O. (Col.)	Ghana Armed Forces	Ministry of Defence P.O. Box 16528 KIA General Headquarters Burma Camp Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 77 40 15 Tel: (233) 21 77 14 32 Cell: (233) 24 32 84 31 Fax: (233) 21 77 29 16
Baiden Dorcas	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)	P.O. Box CT 3140 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 24 46 20 02 Tel: (233) 21 81 12 91 esinana@2000@ yahoo.com

Abiti Dickson K.	Ministry of Defence (MOD)	Ministry of Defence CD Burma Camp Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 76 11 16 Fax: (233) 21 81 13 22
Selby Everest	Attorney General's Department	Ministry of Justice P.O. Box M 60 Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 66 34 77 Tel: (233) 66 20 47
Mensah Francis A.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	P.O. Box M 53 Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 66 34 77 Tel: (233) 21 66 20 47
Dariko-Mensah Joseph (Hon.)	Member of Parliament Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Defence & Interior	Parliament House Osu – Accra - Ghana	Cell: (233)027 59 45 90 Fax: (233) 21 66 59 57
Nimene J. Alphonso S.	ULSU/EXILED Liberian Student Leaders	Buduburam Refugee Camp	mooshnimene@yahoo.com
Sampson J. Korku	ULSU/EXILED Liberian Student Leaders	Buduburam Refugee Camp	Vanguard70@yahoo.com karso68@yahoo.com
Ackah Joseph E. (Hon.)	Member of Parliament Committee on Defence and Interior	Parliament House Osu – Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 22 40 13 52 Fax: (233) 21 66 59 57
Hodari-Okae K.	Ministry of Immigration	HQ. Gh. Immigration Service Accra - Ghana	Tel: (233) 21 22 62 82 Tel: (233) 24 32 39 82

Woiwor Kpedee	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)	P. O. Box CT 3140 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	kpedeewoivor@hotmail.com	
Addae-Mensah Levina	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)	Ampomah House Accra - Ghana	Laddae-mensa@wanep.org www.wanep.org	Tel: (233) 21 22 13 18 Tel: (233) 21 22 13 88 Fax: (233) 21 22 17 35
Quainoo Arnold (Lt. Gen.)	Center for Conflict Resolution (CENCOR)	P. O. Box LG 33 Legon – Accra - Ghana	cencor@email.com	Tel: (233) 21 76 74 05 Fax: (233) 21 76 74 05
Bawumia Mumuni Abdulai	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Interior Accra - Ghana		Tel: (233) 21 66 51 98
Addo Prosper N.	African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR)	P. O. Box LG 347 Legon – Accra Ghana	asdr@africaonline.com.gh www.africansecurity.org rossjpnn@hotmail.com	Tel: (233) 21 51 05 15
Nagb Roseline Jargbe	Liberian Student Leaders	Buduburam Refugee	yanguard70@yahoo.com	
Larver Rosemary	Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)	P. O. Box CT 3140 Cantonments Accra - Ghana	marie-rose@mail.com	Tel: (233) 21 81 12 91 Fax: (233) 21 81 13 22
Asiama Wendy	Amnesty International (Ghana)	Royal Cattle Road Accra - Ghana	amnesty@gh.org	Tel: (233) 21 22 08 05 Fax: (233) 21 22 08 14
LIBERIA Biriama Thomas N.	Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE)	10 th Street Sinkor Monrovia - Liberia	tubrima@yahoo.com cede94@aol.com	Tel: (231) 22 68 03 Tel: (231) 651 05 24 Cell: 377 47 51 05 24

Cooper Etweada A.	Liberian Women Initiative	Broad Street, 11 P.O. Box 1063 Monrovia - Liberia	etwedac@yahoo.com womeninitiative@yahoo.com	Tel: (231) 22 70 95 Cell: 377 47 51 86 66 Fax: (231) 22 70 95
Wolokolie Dusty	Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE)	P.O. Box 3676 Monrovia - Liberia	dustywolokolie@yahoo.com	Tel: (231) 22 69 59
NIGERIA				
Akumadu Theresa U.	Women's Centre for Peace and Development (WOPED)	Ago Palace Way 17 Okota - Lagos - Nigeria	wopednig@yahoo.com	Tel: (234) 80 328 56 79 Tel: (234) 1 773 10 15
Ebo Adedeji	African Strategic and Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG)	Dept. of Political Science Nigeria Defence Academy Kaduna - Nigeria	adedejebo@yahoo.com	Tel: (234) 62 23 42 31 (234) 80 33 11 49 35
Mbagwu Joan	African Strategic and Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG)	Lju Water Works, 302 Rd. Ishaga Agege Lagos - Nigeria	afstrag@cyberspace.net.ng	Tel: (234) 1 471 36 97 Fax: (234) 80 33 40 08 46 (234) 80 33 21 33 42
Ojekunle Adeoba	Africa Leadership Forum	The Bells Drive, 1 Idiroko Road Benja Village Ota, Ogun State Nigeria	ojekunke@africaleadership.org www.africaleadership.org	Tel: (234) 39 722 73 03 Fax: (234) 39 722 742
Olukoya Sam	AFRIDA	Balogun Street Ikeja, 1 Lagos - Nigeria	afrida@mail.com www.mosopcanada.org	Tel: (234) 80 33 10 97 72 Fax: (234) 1 269 50 25