

ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture: the Institutional Framework

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Historical background and rationale

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is made up of fifteen West African States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cap Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. From the early nineties, the institutional evolutions of the ECOWAS can be seen as an attempt to establish a common conceptual reference which would give regional backing to national processes of democratization and development. The ECOWAS provides a unique example of an economic organisation whose agenda is becoming primarily focused on security issues. The Treaty establishing it was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on 28 May 1975, and revised in Cotonou, Benin, on 24 July 1993. According the Treaty, *“the aims of the Community are to promote cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among Member States and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent”*. ECOWAS thus was initially and primarily focused on development missions. The spread of insecurity, however, led it to tackle the problem of the twofold “militarization of politics” all over the sub-region:

- On the one hand, the militarization through conflicts (rebellions, civil wars and armed conflicts) which have been spreading over the region from the early 1990's. First, the ECOWAS involved itself in conflict management on an *ad hoc* basis, thanks to the set up in 1990 of a sub-regional intervention force, ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The ECOMOG acted as a buffer force in Liberia (1990-1998), in Sierra Leone (1997-2000) in Guinea-Bissau (1998-1999), in Côte d'Ivoire (2003) and again in Liberia (2003). In 1999, a Protocol creating the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security was adopted¹.

- On the other hand, the militarization of the governance through coups or military dominance over government which used to be a major trend of the political governance in West Africa from the mid 1960's. Over the period following the independence movements, West Africa was indeed marked by the presence of military-dominated governments and a lot of military established themselves as key political actors, creating an acute crisis in political governance. Considering that the 1999 Mechanism doesn't deeply address structural roots of conflicts, the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was added to this Mechanism in December 2001, thus becoming an integral part of it. The Supplementary Protocol's main concern is the development of a constitutional State based on the rule of law, the strengthening of democracy and the adoption of common principles of good governance within ECOWAS' 15 member-states. The Supplementary Protocol thus represents an important step in the regional process of building a democratic political governance framework for supporting economic and social development in West Africa.

¹ In 1998, ECOWAS member states also signed the Declaration on a Moratorium on importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa, commonly known as the West African Small Arms Moratorium. The ECOWAS Small Arms control Program (ECOSAP), previously named the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), led by the UNDP was set up in support of the Moratorium.

The emergence in West Africa of a new regional security system is a challenge not only to the political and operational capabilities of ECOWAS member-states, but also to the theoretical apparatus with which we approach strategic studies.

- From an empirical perspective, there is a question of the ability of West African states to fully implement the provisions of the numerous texts and documents that have been adopted recently by ECOWAS;

- From a more theoretical perspective, the issue at stake can be raised as follows: Can the regional level be a driver for national security-reform processes (reform of the state through the reform of security forces)? Does the ECOWAS institutional framework define the basis for a new legitimacy for the state, by involving its security forces in an agenda engaging its responsibility to protect its own citizens, to insure their material and moral integrity and their dignity?

This paper aims to study the revision of the concepts of regional security. Human security norms clearly underlie new security organs and mechanisms recently created by ECOWAS as well as the security policies that its member-states are supposed to implement. State-centred paradigm –particularly influent in most of the studies dealing with African security issues - is challenged by new thinking about “human security.” Human security defines a new basis for the state’s legitimacy, which from now on depends on its ability to protect its citizens from violence and insecurity. Human security not only includes protection from direct violence, but also from poverty, food insecurity, disease, environmental degradation etc. This concept require the restoration of state capacities, especially those of its security forces (military, police force, ...) who are called to fulfil new missions. Security sector reform (SSR) is thus viewed as crucial for the improvement of democratic governance and development within West African states, be they in post-conflict situation or not.

ECOWAS Security Institutional Framework: the West African Peace and Security Architecture

The PNA and PMAD

In April 1978, ECOWAS Member States adopted the so-called Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) which enjoined Member States to “refrain from the threat and use of force or aggression” against each other. A subsequent Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD) was signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 1981 and became effective five years later. The PMAD committed the ECOWAS member states to a collective defence treaty by accepting that armed threat or aggression against one constituted a threat or aggression against the Community as a whole and resolved to give mutual aid and assistance for defence. This Protocol provides for a collective response where a member state is a victim of internal armed conflict that is engineered and supported actively from outside, and which is likely to endanger the peace and security of other member states.

However, when the Liberian conflict broke out in 1989, ECOWAS members proved unable to find an agreement to activate the PMAD. Consequently, ECOWAS member-states (Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Togo, Mali) belonging to the Standing Mediation Committee (set up three months earlier with the mandate of mediating disputes between member-states) decided to set up an *ad hoc* force, the so-called ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

The ECOMOG, an *ad hoc* experience

To prevent the overthrow of the unpopular government of President Samuel Doe by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, the ECOMOG's cease-fire monitoring mandate quickly transformed into a robust peacekeeping operation between 1990 and 1998.

While some commentators put the ECOWAS' intervention in Liberia down to Nigeria's leadership aspirations for the region, two other factors were also clearly relevant: humanitarian concerns and concerns over regional security. Guinea and Sierra Leone were hosting tens of thousands of Liberians seeking refuge from the war; along with Gambia, they also had dissident nationals fighting with Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia, so there was a real threat that NPFL success in Liberia could destabilise the governments in those countries, as proved to be the case in Sierra Leone. Critiqued for its lack of neutrality, financial and logistical preparedness, and a unified approach, both among ECOWAS, some of whose governments openly supported Taylor, and within ECOMOG, ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia is often summarised as ambiguous at best.

Later on, the ECOMOG acted as a buffer force in Sierra Leone (1997-2000) in Guinea-Bissau (1998-1999), in Côte d'Ivoire (2003) and again in Liberia (2003).

In Sierra Leone, where ECOMOG troops helped return the democratically elected government to power in 1998 and repelled the 1999 invasion of Freetown, the analysis is less critical, but even in Liberia, ECOMOG is credited for preventing Charles Taylor from overrunning the entire country, for helping to hold elections that concluded the first phase of fighting in 1996 and for ensuring stability once Charles Taylor stepped down from power in 2003.

While Francophone countries (apart from Senegal for a period) stayed out of ECOMOG and largely opposed the intervention, they became more involved in brokering peace agreements in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and with the support of France, took the lead in interventions in Guinea-Bissau (1998-1999) and Cote d'Ivoire (2003, known as ECOWAS Peace Force, which was later subsumed into the UN peacekeeping force) (Adebajo, 2004).

These interventions have had profound effects on ECOWAS' *modus operandi*, presenting as they do a sharp break from the region (and continent's) previous adherence to non-intervention and the inviolability of state sovereignty. Since the start of its ECOMOG experiment, changes to the 1975 Treaty and subsequent protocols have reflected this shift in thinking.

The 1993 Revised ECOMOG Treaty

The factors contributing to the adoption of the 1993 treaty included : the need to respond to the prevailing economic environment (including providing additional insulation against external competition and improved bargaining positions in North-South negotiations); the downturn in Nigeria's fortunes which allowed the creation of organs (such as the Court of Justice) that could, in theory, circumscribe its role as a regional hegemon; and civil society demands for increased involvement in decision-making. Additionally, security reasons played a large role – conflicts in the region had shown that rebel armies could pose a serious threat to the Community's ruling elites, and ECOMOG had demonstrated the importance of military economies of scale through regional cooperation. That is why one of the most important provisions of the 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty is the article 58 which urges member-states to establish and strengthen collective security mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

The 1999 Security Mechanism and the 2001 Supplementary Protocol

From 1999, the institutional evolutions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can be seen as an attempt to establish a common conceptual reference which would give regional backing to West African states' involvement in peacekeeping missions.

In 1999, a Protocol creating the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security was adopted². In addition, considering that the 1999 Mechanism doesn't deeply address structural roots of conflicts, the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was added in December 2001 to the 1999 Mechanism, thus becoming an integral part of it. Both the Security Mechanism and the Supplementary protocol represent an important step in the regional process of building a democratic political governance framework for supporting peace and development in West Africa. Hence, the ECOWAS Security Mechanism and its Supplementary Protocol are respectively the instruments designed to respond to a twofold requirement for security, democracy and development:

- the 1999 Mechanism aims to control the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts ;
- whereas the Supplementary Protocol is facing the challenge of democratisation and good governance.

ECOWAS Security Organs

Chapter II of the 1999 Mechanism establishes various organs which have authority to deal with security issues:

- 1)The ECOWAS Authority, made of Heads of State and Governments of Member-states
- 2)The Mediation and security Council (MSC) which comprises 9 Member-States and is mandated (according to article 7 of the Protocol) by the Authority to take, on its behalf, appropriate decisions in case of crisis and emergency;
- 3)The supporting organs established by article 17 to assist the MSC: a) the Defence and Security Commission which is responsible for examining all technical issues and comprises Chiefs of Defence staffs from all member-states, officers responsible for internal affairs and security, experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and heads of Migrations, Customs, Border Guards and civil protection; b) The Committee of Elders made up of eminent personalities chosen by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the member-states; c) the ECOMOG which is institutionalised as a standing force and put under the direct control of the MSC.
- 4) The Department of Peace Keeping and Regional Security (DPKRS) - formally known as the Department for Political Affairs and Peace within the Executive Secretariat – which is one of the departments under the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (C-PAPS). This department was established in accordance with Article 16 of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism. The Director of the Department of Peace Keeping and Regional Security assists the C-PAPS in all matters relating to Peace and Security within the sub region.

² Both the PNA and the PMAD have been subsumed as part of the new ECOWAS Mechanism.

ECOWAS process for deploying peacekeeping troops

According to article 19 of the 1999 Mechanism, it is the DSC (Defence and Security Commission) which, for the consideration of the MSC, is responsible for formulating the mandate of peacekeeping forces, defining the terms of reference for the force and determining the composition of the contingents.

According to article 22 of the 1999 Mechanism, the ECOMOG can be charged with the task of observing and monitoring, peacekeeping and restoration of peace, enforcement of sanctions, including embargo, preventive deployment, peace building, disarmament and demobilization, policing activities, including the control of organized fraud and crime and any other operations as may be mandated by the Mediation and Security Council. Indeed, Article 10.2 empowers the MSC to “*authorize all forms of intervention and decide particularly on the deployment of political and military missions*”. It is also important to note that the Mechanism authorizes ECOMOG intervention in the internal conflicts of the member-states. Article 22 thus empowers ECOMOG to undertake peacekeeping operations in internal conflict where the situation threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster; pose a serious threat to regional peace and security; erupts following the overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically-elected government.

A chain of command is established by the 1999 Mechanism, spanning from the Chief of Mission (article 32.2), the ECOMOG Commander (article 33), the Special Representative (article 34.1), the Force Commander (article 34.2), to the Contingent Commanders (article 34.3).

As regards funding mechanisms, the Executive shall make provisions in its annual budget to finance the activities of the Mechanism.

The provisions of article 52 state that ECOWAS shall, “in accordance with Chapter VII and VIII of the United Nations Charter, inform the United Nations of any military intervention undertaken in pursuit of the objectives of the Mechanism”.

Finally, Chapter IX of the Mechanism relates to the task of peace building in the aftermaths of a conflict: once hostilities have ended, ECOWAS’ efforts will be focused on peace consolidation (article 44.a), establishment of political conditions (article 44.b), implementation of disarmament (article 44.c), resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (article 44.d), and assistance to vulnerable persons (article 44.e).

Role of the ECOWAS Parliament

The ECOWAS Parliament was established under the article 6 and 13 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993. The Protocol relating to the Parliament was signed in Abuja on the 6th August, 1994 and entered into force on 14th March, 2002. It provides for the structure, composition, competence and other matters relating to the Parliament.

The ECOWAS Parliament is composed of 120 seats. Each of the 15 Member States has at least five seats guaranteed. The remaining 40 seats are shared on the basis of population. ECOWAS Parliamentarians are to be elected by direct universal suffrage by citizens of Member States. Pending when Members of Parliament are thus elected, the National Assemblies of Member states or their equivalent institutions or organs are empowered to elect members from among themselves.

The Parliament is a forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus for representatives of the peoples of West Africa. The Parliament is empowered to consider issues concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens; technical matters (such as interconnection of energy networks; interconnection of telecommunications systems and other intra- and inter-

Community media links). The Parliament may also be consulted on matters relating to public health policies; common educational policy; youth and sports; scientific and technological research; and community policy on environment. Other areas for consideration include any issues affecting the Community, especially as they relate to the review of the ECOWAS Treaty, citizenship and social integration. On these issues, the Parliament is invited to make recommendations to the appropriate institutions and/ or organs of the community. Presumably, Parliamentarians may be called to express their views on peacekeeping activities, which are a matter of interest to the Community. However, they have never been called to do so and from this perspective, there is clearly a serious democratic that need to be addressed.

The 2001 Supplementary Protocol

The 2001 Supplementary Protocol's main concern is the development of a constitutional state based on the rule of law, the strengthening of democracy and the adoption of common principles of good governance within ECOWAS' 15 member-states. It aims to provide a normative basis for the 1999 Mechanism. Before the establishment of a security Mechanism in 1999, conflict management in West Africa has been influenced by the militaristic culture which used to be dominant in most of the West African states. Consequently, crisis management in West Africa had only been a military activity, without taking into account civil interventions usually related to peacekeeping. In this respect, the 2001 Supplementary Protocol has introduced a major turn by identifying, through its section IV, four core missions for the West African armed forces:

- defence of the democratic institutions (a.19.1 and a. 19.2). The 2001 Supplementary Protocol illustrate the importance that ECOWAS give to the issue of taking democratic control of the security forces within the framework of security sector governance and the strengthening of the rule of law. "Constitutional Convergence Principles" are defined in the first article of the Supplementary Protocol which stress the necessity for the armed forces to be apolitical and under legally constituted political authority (section 1: depoliticisation of armed forces and exclusion from the exercise of power).
- peacekeeping missions under the ECOWAS, the AU or the UN aegis (a.19). According to the 2001 Protocol's article 19.3, national armed forces and security forces have to participate to ECOMOG in the formats described in article 28 of the 1999 Protocol.
- contribution to national development (a.19.5);
- fighting terrorism (a.24.1 et a.24.2, related to the articles 3(d) et 16(1) of the 2001 Protocol).

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF)

The ECPF was enacted by Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08 of the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS on the 16th of January. The Protocols informing the ECPF include the 1978 Protocol on Non-Aggression, the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defence, the 1999 mechanism and its 2001 Supplementary Protocol. At the international level, the ECPF has been informed by the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, adopted in July 2002. Internationally, the ECPF draws from article 52 of the UN Charter.

The ECPF is aimed to address prevention and peace building challenges in West Africa. According to its paragraph 18, conflict prevention is defined as “*activities designed to reduce tensions and prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread or recurrence of violence. Conflict prevention strategies may distinguish between operational prevention (measures applicable in the face of imminent crisis) and structural prevention (measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do not re-occur)*” (Section IV, article 18).

The ECPF does function as an operational tool for the implementation of ECOWAS protocols and mechanisms on peace and security. It also seeks to mainstream conflict prevention into ECOWAS’ policies and programmes, using the existing resources such as the Departments of the Commission (especially the Department for Political Affairs, Peace and Security), the early warning system, the Council of the Wise.

The ECPF identifies fourteen components which include:

Early Warning; Preventive Diplomacy; Democracy and Political Governance; Natural Resource Governance; Cross-Border Initiatives; Security Governance; Women, Peace and Security; Practical-Disarmament; Youth Empowerment; ECOWAS Standby Force; Human Rights and the Rule of Law; Humanitarian Assistance; The Media (role in a Democracy and in Transition); Peace Education (Culture of Peace). Objectives, activities, benchmarks and capacity requirements for each component are identified in the document.

The member-states as well as civil society are presented as the major actors and constituencies in conflict prevention and peace-building. In addition, the ECPF envisions coordination mechanisms with the African as well as with the UN:

- Within the overall framework of AU-ECOWAS cooperation, the African Union shall: a. work in partnership with ECOWAS to identify conflict prevention and peace-building opportunities for cooperative action with ECOWAS and Member States; b. work in partnership with ECOWAS to create space and facilitate resource mobilization for capacity-building and the implementation of the ECPF in Member States; c. facilitate the enhancement of ECOWAS capacity for the implementation of the ECPF.
- Within the overall framework of UN-ECOWAS cooperation, the United Nations shall: a. provide political legitimacy for the realization of ECOWAS goals within the framework of the ECPF; b. cooperate with ECOWAS in creating space and mobilizing financial and technical support to implement the priority areas of human security in the region; c. render support for capacity-building of ECOWAS, Member States and civil society to undertake conflict prevention and peace-building activities.

Promoting a Conceptual Framework for Security Sector Governance in West Africa

Over the last two decades, ECOWAS has developed a normative framework for security sector governance (SSG) in West Africa which is encapsulated in the peace and security architecture of the region. This normative framework provides the basic elements of an emerging common understanding of SSG. SSG must be seen as an essential aspect of conflict prevention in West Africa which is one of the core mandates of ECOWAS.

However, it is widely acknowledge that there is a wide gap between this normative framework and the actual practices of states and non-state actors on the ground. Today, there is an urgent need to implement ECOWAS existing regulatory procedures, but also to establish a conceptual framework which would go beyond the provisions of these texts which proved to be insufficient in promoting and enforcing security governance. From this

perspective, operationalising the “security sector governance” component of the ECPF must be seen as the top priority.

Assessment of the West African Security Environment

There is no major war or conflict currently at stake in the region. Yet, stability and peace are very fragile whilst the security needs of grass-root people are not addressed in most of the countries in the region.

Since the adoption of the Lomé 1999 Mechanism, ECOWAS can be seen as a model of security cooperation as regards intervention and peacekeeping. However, ECOWAS past interventions in peacekeeping and conflict management prove that, for this collective security system to be fully effective there is a dire need to launch deep security reforms in most of the West African states. Indeed, past interventions have demonstrated:

- In some cases, a lack of professionalism, even if the situation has tended to improve over the years;
- A lack of operationality;
- A lack of commitment to the respect of human rights.

In fact, most of the national security institutions are “poorly structured, corrupt, unprofessional, ill-equipped and governed by corruptible oversight bodies”, as stated by the Head of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas. In addition, poor recruitment practices, inadequate training and poor salaries, leading to corruption, are a common feature of most of the ECOWAS member-states. They lack the human, material and technical capacity to deal with the myriad of security challenges. Furthermore, in post-conflict environments, irregular armed forces with divided loyalties and which are improperly trained are a major challenge to be faced. The security forces are more than often politicized and ethnicized.

Furthermore, there is currently a resurgence of praetorianism in the region: the role of defence and military forces in political governance has been an issue of growing concern over last past years. As mentioned above, West Africa has a long history of authoritarian military rule: Senegal is the only country which has not experienced a military coup or rule. Unconstitutional overthrows of governments have recently occurred in Guinea and Mauritania, whilst the role of the military has been exorbitant in Niger and Guinea Bissau. In addition, the democratization processes in some countries have not been sufficient to make security decision-making processes more inclusive.

Furthermore, whilst there is a tendency towards the end of large-scale conflicts, the West African region is experiencing a shift towards endemic transnational criminality. The security apparatuses of West African states are far from meeting the requirement to deal with the emergence of a number of new threats, which are mostly transnational in essence:

- Large natural resources endowments;
- Transnational criminal networks, involved in illegal arms transfers and proliferation of light and small weapons, drug trafficking (particularly in Guinea Bissau), piracy, poaching, illegal dumping of toxic waste, human smuggling and trafficking; harassment and kidnapping (road cutters); money laundering;
- Lax maritime and air security;
- Internal security threats;
- Inequitable distribution of resources;
- Poverty, disease; population growth;

- Food insecurity;
- Ethno-religious strife.

State-centric security has proved to be unable to meet the challenges of new emerging threats. In fact, SSR as implemented in West Africa is not taking into account the new and emerging security threats. Rather than being oriented toward a preventive approach, SSR is more than often reactive and mainly focused on post-conflicts environments.

Definition of Security Sector Governance (SSG)

The ECOWAS conceptual framework to SSG should first of all refer to the ECPF Chapter dealing with Security Sector Governance (SSG) which clearly anchors SSG into a human-security centred approach thus. However, it is important for the ECOWAS conceptual framework to clarify how security sector relates to human security:

- first, the human security concept has operated a shift from the traditionally military-focused and state-centric definition of security to a people-centered view of security. From this perspective, the security sector has to meet the security needs of both the state and the individuals whilst respecting the rule of law and Human Rights.

- Second, according to the initial definition proposed by the 1994 United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP), human security includes seven interrelated fields: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. In sum, the human security concept relates both to freedom from fear and to freedom from want. It is important not to consider that all the security needs embraced by the human security concept according to the UNDP definition can be addressed but the very defence and security forces. The duty of the defence and security services is only to address "freedom from fear". Involving security and defence forces in coping with "freedom from want" would amount in securitizing development policies (which is of risk). The issue at stake for ECOWAS is to clearly determine which threats individuals and states should be protected from by the armed and security forces and over the appropriate mechanisms to address those threats. Protecting citizens' welfare as well as environment is the duty of the state as such but not of the defence and security services. Consequently, promoting economic security should not be seen a duty of the defence and security forces. Those forces have to be entrusted with food security only in context of crisis (natural disaster or disease). The same applies to health security, even if the populations should have access, when possible, to the health facilities of the armed and security forces. In fact, the core missions of defence and security forces should be focused on promoting and defending personal security (physical safety of individuals), community security (protection of ethnic and religious groups' integrity) and political security (protection of the territorial independence and institutions of the state, protection of public liberties, rule of law and human rights).

In addition, when accomplishing the duties mentioned above, the armed and security forces (democratic control) have to operate under a democratic control, which means that they have to be accountable and responsive to oversight of the executive, legislative, judiciary and independent institutions.

In sum, SSG means that the armed and security forces have to be entrusted with the responsibility to protect personal, community and political security – and in cases of emergency food and health security – and have to operate in the respect of human rights and rule of law under the supervision of democratic institutions to which it must be responsive and accountable.

Principles and key pillars of SSG in West Africa

- SSG in West Africa should refer to the existing AU and ECOWAS peace and security norms and frameworks;
- SSG should be primarily seen as a preventive strategy to be promoted in post-conflict environments (to avoid new irruptions of violence originating in security sector bad governance) as well as in stable (democratizing as well as non-democratic) environments (to address roots of conflicts which directly stems from the absence of democratic control of the security apparatus and to make it efficient in dealing with new emerging security threats).;
- Lessons-learnt from past security sector reform (SSR experiences) should systematically be taken into account when designing SSG programmes;
- Customized approaches to SSG should be based on member states peculiarities, especially those deriving from the historical, cultural and social legacies;
- Security sector should be accountable to elected civilian authority (both executive and legislative) and managed in a transparent way (especially as regards public expenditure management);
- to the interventions of the security and defence forces should abide to domestic constitutional law, rule of law, human rights and international legislations;
- ECOWAS member-states should demonstrate a strong political will in promoting SSG at the national and at the regional level;
- SSG should involve a consultative process among all stakeholders. In particular, the medias and civil societies should take an active role in SSG to favour the emergence and consolidation of transparent and participatory security systems.

Suggestions for an ECOWAS Action Plan

The overarching objective of the following paragraphs is to draw some guidelines to translate a common ECOWAS SSG concept into practice.

At the ECOWAS level

Authority of Heads of state and governments

The Authority of the Heads of states and government should amend the 1999 Mechanism, article 19, to broaden the duties and responsibilities of the Defence and Security Commission

(DSC) beyond the current peacekeeping role. A particular focus should be put on the role of the DSC in defining a regional strategy to address transnational threats and criminality as described by the 1999 Protocol.

The Authority should also take decisions to develop a collective regional approach to intelligence which is highly needed in a context where transnational insecurities are spreading over the region.

Establishing a coalition of “reform-minded” states

The ECOWAS SSR agenda would be enhanced by the existence of a coalition of reform-minded states. States which have already undertaken a reform process of their security sector should act as sponsors of a common SSG concept and should work to maintain it on the ECOWAS agenda.

Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers should:

- Adopt a regulation (which will have general application and in which all provisions will be directly enforceable and applicable in member-states) or a decision (enforceable in Member-states and all designated therein) to adopt a regulatory framework with a sanction regime on non-statutory armed groups. This regulation/decision should be based on a very detailed definition and description of the groups falling under this category. The Department of Early Warning (DEW) of the ECOWAS Commission should conduct a scoping study to help draw such a definition. Though it is recommended that mercenaries, terrorist groups and militias should be considered as non-statutory armed groups; vigilante groups and private security companies should not be included in this category;
- Adopt a regulation or a decision on private security companies. Such a regulation/decision should make clear that: 1/ all the activities of private security companies involved in security reform processes in West Africa should be submitted to the scrutiny of the Defence and Security Commissions of the national Parliaments; 2/ priority should be given to West African private security contractors;
- Adopt a regulation/decision clarifying the relationships between formal and informal security actors (the latter referring to vigilante groups and communitarian self-defence groups) on the one hand, and between formal and informal justice providers (the latter referring to the traditional and customary authorities) on the other. The role of the informal security and justice providers should only be recognised and institutionalised in the extent to which their practices and judgments do show respect to basic human rights principles.

Involving the ECOWAS Parliament in SSG

In order for the ECOWAS Parliament to be increasingly involved in SSG matters in the region, the following initiatives should be undertaken:

- Hold a general training session on SSG and SSR for all ECOWAS Parliamentarians;

- Organise specialised training sessions for the Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defence and Security Standing Committee: these sessions should be focused on: 1/ the functioning of the security and legal systems (institutional, organisational and administrative features) in Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone member-states; 2/ budgeting processes and defence/security policies;
- Hire one SSR expert to work on a permanent basis with the Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defence and Security Standing Committee. This expert will act as an interface between ECOWAS Parliament and the Defence, Security and Laws Commissions of the member-states and will be responsible for centralising and disseminating all the data and information relating to: 1/ the activities of the ECOWAS Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defence and Security Standing Committee; 2/ the Defence, Security and Laws Commissions of the member-states Parliaments; 3/ the activities of the security reform processes launched in each member-state (thanks to the information provided by the national Defence, Security and Laws Commissions of the member-states' Parliaments);
- The Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defence and Security Standing Committee report twice a year to the Authority of the Heads of State and Government; to the Council of Ministers; to the President of the ECOWAS Commission and to the Mediation and Security Council (MSC). The first report should provide information related to the activities of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Standing Committees in each of ECOWAS member-states (hearings, information missions, laws drafted or adopted); the second report should put together the data collected by each national Parliament on the security system and the processes undertaken to reform them;
- The Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defence and Security Standing Committee should organise an annual session for all the Defence and Security Committees of the member-states, in order to facilitate exchanges between member-states' Parliaments on security issues. The scope of such sessions will be to support the intensification of interaction between African parliamentarians across linguistic boundaries to: 1/ enable them to enjoy the prerogatives they are endowed by their respective Constitutions; 2/ share the various and uneven experiences of parliamentary oversight of the security systems (best practices exchanges).

ECOWAS Commission

Office of the President

An SSR expert should be hired by the Department of External Relations. Working closely with the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), this Officer should be responsible for:

- ensuring efficient and effective coordination of resource mobilisation: this Officer will act as an interface with international donors;
- developing a communication strategy on ECOWAS' approach towards SSG. Such a communication strategy should be developed and implemented working closely with West African media. The first step should be to identify all the media of significant importance in each member-state: a special focus should be put on radio, especially

the independent, communitarian and rural radio stations. A Communications Assistant should assist the SSR officer: this Communications Assistant would be responsible for providing the media with information relating to: 1/ ECOWAS SSG-related activities; 2/ SSG processes undertaken in the different member-states.

Raising SSR awareness among ECOWAS' Commission Offices and Departments

To assist in the mainstreaming of SSG in the activities of the Offices of the Commission, ECOWAS Training on 'Security Sector Governance: Challenges and approaches' should be updated regularly (at least once a year), through follow-up training and/or reports to gauge how the integration of SSG is progressing.

Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS)

Early Warning System

The ECOWAS Department of Early Warning (DEW) in charge of the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) should be entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the collection of information relating to the security and defence forces of the region. For the zonal bureaux to adopt a "participatory regional approach in data gathering" as stated in article 45.d of the ECPF, the following will be required:

- Each zonal bureau (Banjul, Monrovia, Ouagadougou and Cotonou) should be staffed with one or two SSG analysts or SSR training should be provided to the staff currently employed;
- The SSG officers of the four zonal offices should be entrusted to collect the information relating to the security systems of the countries which depend on their observation and monitoring zones;
- Data and information should be provided to the four zonal offices by both the member-states (i.e. below the interagency SSG structure) and the civil society constituencies involved in security matters (i.e. below civil society's focal points);
- A clear methodology for information gathering should be defined. A set of very concrete indicators should be defined against which the records of the member-states' security systems can be assessed and benchmarked. Relevant indicators should include both structural factors and accelerators, as suggested by the Section III of the ECPF and could be categorized as follows: 1/ Defence and security forces professionalism; 2/ Democratic governance (constitutional and legal framework; activities of the oversight and supervision bodies; media access to information related to defence and security); 3/ Satisfaction of the population's security needs;
- The lessons learned from the past and current SSR processes in the region should be systematically integrated into the analysis. The focus should not only be put on SSR experiences in post-conflict environments but also on experiences in stable environments (including the non-democratic ones) which are not usually labelled as SSR;

- Beyond the assessment of the national security systems, the reports should make recommendations to address the weaknesses identified;
- On the basis of the information and data provided by the four zonal offices, the DEW in Abuja should put together a report on West African defence and security agencies, as stated by article 74.b of the ECPF. Such a study should provide the basis for the first overall assessment of SSG needs in the region. Furthermore, it would be key to update this study each year in order to assess progress as well as identify any cases where the process may be working in reverse;
- The DEW should also launch opinion polls each year in order to measure the extent to which the public perception of the defence and security forces is increasing or decreasing over time;
- An appropriate dissemination strategy of the situation reports should be defined, in close collaboration with the Communications Assistant of the External Relations Directorate. Reports should be sent to: the executive and legislative authorities of each member-state (to inform them about the situation in other countries); the media; the civil society focal points; the UN and the AU (in order to develop formal links with the continental warning system); international advocacy NGOs (such as International Crisis Group, Amnesty international, Human Right Watch);
- The DEW as well as the zonal offices should be endowed with modern IT equipment to build a data base on SSR processes and resources in the region;
- The DEW should coordinate a scoping study to define clear criteria to categorise armed groups.

Peace Keeping and Security Department

The human resources of the Peacekeeping and Security Department should be reinforced with two SSG officers.

ECOWAS member-states

All ECOWAS member-states have to recognise the need for SSG. It is now widely recognised that security reform processes must be seen as an essential part of peace-building processes in post-conflict countries. However, SSG can not be considered as exclusively relevant to post-conflict environments. It is now urgent that stable countries, be they democratising or under undemocratic rule, undertake a wide security reform process in order to meet the new security challenges. Most of the West African states have in some way launched processes to reform their security system. However, such reform processes have largely been led on an *ad hoc* basis. In addition, these security reform processes have been mostly focused on operational/technical reforms whilst institutional reforms (aiming to democratically ground the security system) have been neglected in a large extent. Security reform has to go beyond the military and the police – which means going beyond the security interests of the state or the regime – to include the security architecture as a whole.

Ratifying ECOWAS security instruments (to ensure cohesion across the region)

To show and demonstrate their political will, West African states have to support ECOWAS derived mechanisms and peace architecture by ratifying and implementing all of the security instruments.

Setting up a National Security Policy at the strategic level

Every West African state should define and adopt a National Security Strategy which should derive from a comprehensive assessment of the West African security environment. Even if each country has its own specificities, there are a number of similar challenges which must be addressed by all ECOWAS member-states and which must be addressed by the national security strategies:

- Answering the security needs of the population at large by ensuring that each citizen has access to public security;
- Coping with the resurgence of military coups and the retreat of democracy in some stable countries;
- Fighting trans-regional criminal networks involved in illegal arms transfers and the proliferation of light and small weapons, drug trafficking, piracy, poaching; illegal dumping of toxic waste, human smuggling and trafficking; harassment and kidnapping (road cutters); money laundering;
- Tackling risks of internal turmoil (ethno-religious strife, civil war and rebellion);
- Addressing weaknesses in maritime and air security;
- Managing the growing competition for natural and strategic resources (particularly in the Gulf of Guinea) which are attracting both West African and external actors;

To design the document, an interagency process should be launched at the governmental level. Staff from the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Security, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Water/Forest Resources, Ministry of Finance (especially the Customs Directorate) should work closely with the Offices of the Presidency. The legislative branch as well as independent oversight institutions (Parliament, Audit Account and Ombudsman) should be fully associated to these interagency consultations as well representatives from the civil society constituencies.

Creating interagency units in charge of coordinating SSG at the governmental level

Every ECOWAS member-state should create an interagency unit at the governmental level. Such a unit would be responsible for coordinating the launch of reform processes in each sector (defence, police, justice, customs, water/forests, etc) of the national security system. This unit should be set up at the highest level (Office of the Presidency).

Such an interagency unit will be responsible for:

- Coordinating the reforms launched in the different sectors of the security system to avoid any duplication;
- Raising awareness of the challenges at stake in SSG among the different administrations and services involved in security and justice policies: once a year, a seminar

presenting the objectives of the reform process as well as ways to implement it should be organised at the governmental level;

- Liaising with the oversight institutions (Parliament, Audit Account, Ombudsman Office, Human Rights Commission);
- Liaising with civil society representatives and the media;
- Providing the ECOWAS DEW with all the information relating to security reform processes undertaken at the country level.

Improving the management of the security sector in the executive branch

A number of reforms – mostly aimed to foster security governance – could be inspired by some positive experiences and practices in other African countries, which have contributed to greater accountability and democratic governance of the security sector in accordance with the rule of law and the respect of human rights. In line with article 53.b of the ECPF, it would be advisable for ECOWAS member-states to adopt the following measures:

- Support the setting up of collegial decision-making organs, both at the strategic level (National Security Council-type structures) and at the operational level (Defence and police council-types);
- Promote civilian control within the executive branch by integrating more civilians into the decision-making bodies of the Ministries of Defence, including setting up a civilian counterpart to the Chief of Defence staff;
- Set up structures inspired by the South African National Intelligence Coordinating Committee (NICOC) to oversee the activities of the intelligence services;
- Anchor the supervision of the resources of the security sector in the law and the constitution and develop a sector wide budget for security, as has been done in some Anglophone African countries.
- Develop good practice exchanges with countries which are considered to have a good record in terms of security governance. There is a crucial need for West African countries to share security sector reform sound and best practice. The “good willing” states should send some of their national experts to neighbouring countries: the objective would be to launch South-South best practice exchanges, on a bilateral basis. For instance, an officer from the Directorate of Public Relations of the Senegalese armed forces could explain to the officers of other armed forces how the Senegalese armed forces approach civil-military relations in general and relations with the media in particular; a civil servant from the Malian Ministry of Finance could explain to his West African counterparts how Mali has introduced sound budgeting processes in the defence sector over the past decade. A magistrate or a lawyer from Benin could present the principles of the decennial Plan for Justice Modernisation. Longer-term exchanges could be arranged to assist countries who are willing to establish similar structures or to launch similar reforms.

Restructuring and right-sizing national security agencies

Article 74.g of the ECPF urges ECOWAS member-states to “launch initiative to restructure and right-size national security agencies in post-conflict environments”. Such a statement is not only valid for post-conflict countries (even if specific approaches have to be developed there) but has to be widened to all West African countries. The following reforms could

contribute to restructuring the security system in a way that meets the needs of the strategic environment.

Maximising the ability of the security sector to protect the citizens and to promote public security

Since independence, a large number of West African states have experienced a militarisation of the internal order which has resulted in the weakening of the police forces. Yet, police forces have to be seen as the most important actors to answer the security needs of the population. Frequently police forces are under-staffed, under-paid and under-equipped and are therefore unable to cope with public insecurity.

All West African states should make a major shift from the approach that favours the armed forces to an approach that gives priority to the police forces.

A number of specific reforms have to be launched in most West African states with regard to their police forces:

- Adopt a code of conduct for the police forces;
- Adopt or revise the status of the police forces;
- Rationalise the organisation of the police services;
- Clarify the sharing of responsibilities between different police forces;
- Develop a less coercive approach to law enforcement;
- Improve the judiciary skills of the judicial police services;
- Clarify the relationships between the judiciary police and the Ministry of Justice.

Maximising the ethics of the security services

All the actors of the security system have to become responsive and accountable to democratic control and respectful of human rights. ECOWAS member-states have to organise workshops for the defence and security forces on their rights and responsibilities. Such trainings have to focus on:

- The legal framework: the defence and security services have to become more familiar with the constitutional framework which governs their missions;
- Human rights: each police academy or military school has to ensure that Human rights and rule of law are upheld by incorporating human rights courses into each training programme.

Maximising the professionalism of the defence and security forces

In almost all West African states, the lack of professionalism can often be explained by the lack of a transparent and merit-based policy. The criteria for recruitment and promotion within the armed and security forces is characterised by a high degree of opaqueness. Privileges and promotion are more often than not allocated on a subjective basis: even in countries where there is no exclusive ethnic-based policy, ethnic affiliations and regional ties matter more than professionalism. In addition, West African security and defence forces have not been properly trained and in some cases, have barely been trained at all.

ECOWAS member-states should:

- Ensure fair, balanced and equitable recruitment. A special focus should be put on the transformation of the composition of the institution with regards to its social, ethnic, regional and gender composition, and its human resources practices. To do so, it might be advisable to look at the sound practices of some African countries. For instance, a lot could be learnt from the Cameroon's "*regional balance policy in human resource management*" which ensures that every province is represented in all governmental structures and in all decision-making processes;
- Provide the funding necessary to support national military schools and/or police academies, or send military and police staff to attend training in schools of neighbouring countries, especially the Ecoles nationales à vocation régionale (ENVR).

Building the skills necessary to deal with emerging criminal insecurities

West African states are all confronted by the same criminal transnational threats and are most of the time ill-equipped to address them. A growing number of security challenges are no longer confined to national borders. Consequently, for all West African states there is an urgent need to develop defence and security forces' skills to deal with new emerging transnational threats, given that these threats most fall beyond the reach of individual West African states:

- Firstly, it is crucial to introduce a better balance between the military and other security services, particularly the police forces and paramilitary services such as customs and water forest services.
- It is also necessary to reinforce the role of the intelligence services and to establish strong links with the intelligence systems and networks established at the ECOWAS level. The activities of the intelligence services should however always be submitted to the scrutiny of the Parliament.
- Fundamentally, the shift from conflict to transnational criminality that the West African region is currently experiencing clearly requires rethinking the missions and the organisation of the police forces. The distinction between external security on the one hand - identified by a concern with mainly military threats coming from the aggressive behaviour of other states, and, on the other hand, internal security – identified as criminal, or otherwise disturbing activities, within the boundaries of a state (and captured by criminology or justice studies) – has been increasingly blurred. This implies that both crime and war have tended to meet and, consequently, the role of the military and the police forces have increasingly coincided. The emergence of an increasing number of trans-national risks and threats that increasingly challenge the traditional distinction between internal and external security calls for the rise of a new format for security agencies. Of particular interest is the model of the police forces with military status (gendarmérie-type) that can be found in most of the West African Francophone countries. In a number of aspects, such as with formal affiliation, internal structures and armoury, the gendarmeries occupy an intermediary position between internal and external security forces. In addition to their judiciary and law-enforcement duties, gendarmerie forces have a military defence function (military police, gathering intelligence, protecting sensitive sites) and they perform several more directly combat-related

tasks in the event of war. The gendarmerie has been increasingly deployed toward border areas, and has become involved in fighting arms and drug trafficking.

Maximising the ability of the armed forces to protect the state and its territory: improving operational effectiveness

All West African armed forces are made up of a combination of an army, an air force and a navy (except for landlocked countries). Coastal countries have navies, but they are ill-equipped and seldom operational. In a lot of countries, the air force is a force in name only: in most cases, there are simply no aircraft, and the air force's personnel are employed in other services. In fact, the navy and the air force can be seen as token forces. More generally, the format of the armed forces – mainly tailored as a conventional apparatus meant to be mobilised in inter-state fighting - is far from meeting the requirements necessary to cope with the actual West African strategic environment. Indeed, as stated by all the literature dealing with security in West Africa, over the last two decades conflicts in West Africa have been internal in essence and the West African soldiers have been confronted by furtive and mobile politico-military movements.

The kinds of conflicts that West Africa have been facing for almost two decades primarily require the development of the following capacities:

- Anti-guerrilla skills rather than conventional warfare ones;
- Equipment adapted to these missions (which might imply smaller, more highly skilled forces).

Restructuring the defence and security forces to make them operational for peace missions

ECOMOG (now ESF) past interventions in peacekeeping and conflict management prove that, for the collective security system to be fully effective there is a dire need to launch deep security reforms in most of the West African states. Today, there is a need to promote an integrated approach among ECOWAS member-states to peace operations, under regional (ECOWAS Standby Force), AU (African Standby Force) and UN peacekeeping operations.

All ECOWAS member-states should train and equip their defence and police forces in order to make them meet the requirements necessary to participate in ECOWAS peace missions as provided by Article 28 of the Protocol and for peacekeeping operations (under the auspices of the UN or the AU).

It is important for ECOWAS member-states to consider peacekeeping as a driver from a threefold perspective:

- First, sending contingents to contribute to peacekeeping missions can be a means of accessing interesting financial opportunities which can provide states with significant additional resources to fund their security apparatus autonomously, making them less dependent on donor funding: peacekeeping can have an impact on the ways whereby security institutions and agents (at the individual level) are funded;
- Second, as an activity requested to meet the UN (and consequently international) technical standards, peacekeeping can be a driver for the modernisation of the security

apparatus: this is not only valid as regards the military but also the police forces and increasingly civilian administration (such as justice) which are increasingly likely to be mobilised in the peace-building tasks that most of the peacekeeping missions have to address today. Engagement in peacekeeping missions can therefore be seen as a way to improve the decision-making processes and the organisational structures of the security forces. This point relates to the missions, the leadership and the management of the different armed and police services as well as to the procedures, cooperation, training, doctrines, etc.

- Third, participating in peacekeeping missions enables defence and security apparatuses to improve cooperation and interoperability when intervening along with their regional and continental counterparts, thus contribution to peace missions contributes to harmonising defence and security forces under common procedures and standards.

Consequently, West African states should all develop the peacekeeping capacities of their defence and security forces:

- When a country decides to contribute to peace operations, every staff member should be given the opportunity to be sent on and participate in a mission. Furthermore, every soldier and officer of the West African armies should be given training in the sub-regional peacekeeping schools, namely the Ecole de Maintien de la Paix (Mali), the Kofi Annan Peace Keeping Training Centre (Ghana) and the National War College (Nigeria). These schools should develop common training for the armed and security forces of Anglophone and Francophone countries to satisfy common criteria for the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF).

- Similarly the police forces, which are increasingly involved in peacekeeping as well as peace-building missions, should all be trained at the EUIFORCE (Cameroon).

Involving the defence forces in development projects

According to Section IV.5 of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as well as the article 23 of the West African Code of Conduct for the Armed Forces and the Security Services, member-states armed forces may be drafted to participate in national development programmes.

Traditionally most francophone countries have a role envisioned for their armies in both economic development and in education. Even if these missions are not explicitly mentioned in the Constitutions themselves, missions that more generally involve the military in development or humanitarian projects are often considered as a possible role for the armed forces. Because of its resources, the military is often seen as the only organisation able to perform a wide range of developmental tasks in more remote areas. The use of the armed forces is seen as a way of creating common interests between the population and the military. A lot of the time, the Engineering corps is involved in development/humanitarian missions as well as the Health Service. The armies of Senegal, Mali and Benin have been particularly active in this area (training the public in basic hygiene and sanitation; implementing inoculation and vaccination campaigns; building or repairing schools and/or roads; providing air transport facilities to remote areas).

Such practice should also be endorsed by other ECOWAS member-states. This may be an opportunity to make the development and the security programmes in West Africa more coherent.

Taking into account the institutional and organisational features inherited from colonial rule

The overall objective of ECOWAS member-states should be to promote at the regional level the harmonisation of the practices that will likely contribute to the democratic governance of the security sector in accordance with the rule of law and human rights. However, such a harmonisation process should also take into account the peculiarities of national environments. Reforms aiming to improve the professionalism of the security forces and the efficiency of the functioning of the security system should be highly sensitive to the institutional, organisational and legal particularities of each national context, which are often inherited from different colonial rules.

Indeed, Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone colonial superstructures live on in contrasting approaches to overseeing and managing the security sector. Some reforms could more be efficient if they were contending with the legislative, administrative and organisational frameworks inherited from colonisation.

Among ECOWAS member-states, nine countries have an institutional and organisational framework inherited from the French model. West African Francophone states must recognize that a number of security reforms - mostly technical in essence - should support the emergence of an approach of SSG based on a thorough knowledge of the local context and sensitive to the particularities of the institutional, organisational and legal environments that can be found in Francophone Africa. Consequently, Francophone states should:

- Capitalise – through systematic lessons-learned – all the expertise accumulated by the French technical *cooperants* (defence, police, justice) since independence, exploring the lessons than can be drawn from positive experiences but also – and maybe above all – from negative experiences;
- Consider police reform as a major challenge. There is a need to develop the skills of police forces taking into account their organisational and functional specificities, particularly the divisions between national police forces, gendarmeries forces and municipal police forces. As regards the gendarmeries forces specifically, there is a need to envision the potentialities offered by flexible police forces that can deploy under military or civilian rule, including implications for the size and shape of the security sector. It is also crucial to clarify the role of Ministries of Interior/Internal Affairs, many of whom oversee a range of police forces (including the gendarmeries). The challenge of managing a structure that includes gendarmerie, public order police and judiciary police cannot be underestimated. The relationship between the police forces and the Ministry of Justice should also be clarified;
- As regards the armed forces, there is an urgent need to normalise the status of the presidential guards. More generally, Francophone West African states should identify and value institutional arrangements inherited from the colonial period that: 1/ best fit African social structures; 2/ do not contradict the core principles of a collegial and democratic functioning of the security system, which can mean revising the constitutional frameworks to make the management of security more inclusive and less dependent on executive power, particularly the Presidency.

Integrating the security sector into a system of democratic governance

As stated in article 74.n of the ECPF, there is a need to train and strengthen the oversight and supervision institutions by making them more familiar with the functioning of the security

system. Capacity-building workshops - presenting the command structures, doctrine and ethics of the security forces as well as the policies and procedures with which the security apparatus is functioning – have to be organised. Such training should be organised by the interagency SSG structure (see above) and should involve experts from academia as well as staff from the defence and security forces.

It is particularly important to involve the Parliaments in the control and supervision of the security sector. Beyond the general training to be provided to members of the Defence and Security Commission, the Law Commission and the Finance Commission of Parliament, three measures are of particular importance:

- Address ownership deficit with regard to the oversight role of the Parliament by submitting any SSR programme, especially those supported by international donors, to the control of the national Parliament;
- Improve Parliamentary skills in budgetary and financial management
- Develop the relations between the ECOWAS Parliament and the member-states Parliaments. Each year, the Defence, Security and Laws Commissions of the national Parliaments should send two reports to the ECOWAS Parliament (cf. above): 1/ a report presenting their own activities (hearing, information missions on the grounds, law proposals, etc.); 2/ a report presenting the reforms undertaken by the government (to be established in close collaboration with the SSG interagency structure).

Strongly integrating civil-society organisations in SSG

ECOWAS is by nature an intergovernmental organisation: this intergovernmental essence could constitute a risk that the state-centric approach to security overshadows human-security based approach. More than often, security sector is seen by security sector elites as due to reflect a militaristic and state-centric approach to security. That is why it is particularly crucial for the ECOWAS SSG concept to integrate the views and interests of other public stake-holders. There is a need to incorporate the interests and perspective of grass-root level groups in order for the SSR ECOWAS Concept to be grounded on human-centred definition of security. In most West African countries, the links between the state and society are extremely weak. As stated in article 74.p and q. of the ECPF, there is a need to increasingly involve NGOs, research institutions and civil society more generally in SSG:

- Civil society should organise itself locally to make a substantial contribution to SSG at the national level; it may be advisable for civil society organisations interested in security issues to designate a focal point in charge of gathering the information collected by the media, local authorities, NGOs and academics; such a focal point could be funded by an international donor;
- Country-wide consultative workshop should be launched that could be organised by the national interagency structure. Such workshops could include the media, religious groups, serving as well as retired security personnel and traditional authorities.
- It is also particularly important to integrate the views of trans-border communities which could give particular perspective on trans-regional and regional challenges; the experience of an organisation such as the *Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MALAO) which has been working for year with border communities at the frontier between Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Gambia, could be an interesting model;

- The Africanisation of SSG expertise and the emergence of a pan-African SSG expertise should be supported by existing research and expertise organisations: this will mean encouraging the integration of Francophone and Lusophone African research and assessment capacities into the framework of the existing strong centres and networks which have been working on SSR-related issues for twenty years or so in Anglophone West African countries (ADSR, WANSED, ASSN).

Addressing trends towards the increasing privatisation of SSR support

West African states need to urgently address the challenges of private security companies, including the non-African ones, which are outsourced by external donors (such as MPRI in Nigeria or Dyn Corps in Liberia). The activities of private security companies involved in SSR should be strictly regulated by law. Furthermore, any private SSR activity should be submitted to the scrutiny of the national Parliament. Finally, priority should be given to national private security companies.

Regulating the activities of local non-state and non-statutory security and justice providers

For years, due to the inability of most of West African states to provide basic security and justice to their citizens, informal security and justice providers have been cohabiting with formal security and justice actors operating on behalf of the state. Whilst state security and justice structures have been active in ensuring and enforcing the security and rights of the state as such (and in fact, often, the security and the rights of the regime), informal security and justice structures have been mobilised to promote the security and justice needs of ordinary citizens. Formal security and justice structures are often seen as a threat by ordinary citizens (due to corruption, abuses of power, brutalisation of the very citizens whom security forces are sworn to protect, inequitable judgements, etc.).

Consequently, in line with Article 53.n which urges states to “enhance the effectiveness and fairness of traditional courts to complement the work of the justice system”, ECOWAS member-states should integrate in SSG non-statutory justice providers, including traditional and customary bodies, and possibly extend this provision to non-statutory security providers (such as vigilant or community defence groups set up by the populations).

- The first step is to clearly distinguish between non-statutory security providers which are threatening the populations and those who are considered by them to be a legitimate substitute to state security and justice providers.

- The second step is to clearly state that non-statutory structures have to show respect to human rights. Indeed, non-formal security and justice actors must not be idealised: even if the grass-root populations have tended to rely on these non-formal structures over the years, their records often far from meet basic human rights principles.

- The third step is to find ways to associate non-statutory structures to SSG so that they undertake to adhere to human rights: training sessions should be specifically targeted to the non-statutory security and justice providers.

- Finally, a law should confer a legal status to those organisations and organise their relationships with structures currently recognised as statutory and legal.

Developing and/or clarifying the relationships with external actors

The ECOWAS SSG agenda must be responsive to the role of external actors. However, external actors cannot be seen as homogeneous. There is also a need to make a distinction among a variety of actors, such as:

- The African Union. It is essential that the ECOWAS approach to SSG reflects and feeds directly from continental frameworks such as the Common African Defence and Security Policy and the NEPAD Peace and Security Agenda. SSG in West Africa must be seen as a way to develop a regional integrated approach to joint peace operations within the framework of the AU as well as contributing to the implementation of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (PCRD Policy).
- The United Nations. As stated by the ECPF, ECOWAS SSG conceptualisation must be seen as an input into the current UN dialogue process on a common SSR concept. There is also a need to mainstream SSG-related issues in the regional conflict prevention framework jointly drawn by ECOWAS and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA);
- Multilateral actors with specific interests such as the EU;
- The bilateral actors. Some former-colonial powers have been deeply involved in the governance of the security apparatus of their former colonies since independence. There is a need to submit to the scrutiny of the National Parliament any defence or security/military cooperation agreement. Such agreements should be in accordance with SSG democratic principles. The same should apply to agreements signed with new major bilateral players.

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