



Civil Society Perspectives from The Mano River Union

*An International Peace Academy
Africa Program Civil Society Dialogue*

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On 14 June 2002, the International Peace Academy's (IPA) Africa Program convened a Civil Society Dialogue in New York titled "Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union." The purpose of the meeting was to draw on the experiences of civil society actors who have been involved in conflict management efforts in the three Mano River Union (MRU) countries – Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The meeting provided a platform for civil society leaders from the MRU countries to share information and analyses with the United Nations (UN) community in New York on the consolidation of democracy in West Africa, the role of civil society in peacebuilding, and challenges for improving the effectiveness of civil society actors in the Mano River basin. IPA gratefully acknowledges the support of the governments of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, as well as the Ruth Forbes Young Trust.

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Executive Summary

Some of the views and themes discussed at the International Peace Academy (IPA) Civil Society Dialogue on 14 June 2002, on "Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union (MRU)" included the following:

Developing Clear Mandates and Building a National Constituency: Civil society organizations should develop clear mandates in defining their peacebuilding and conflict prevention, management, and resolution priorities in order to build effective alliances and mobilize national constituencies.

- Participants at the IPA meeting noted that several civil society organizations, created by national governments in the Mano River Union (Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea), have disrupted collective efforts by civil society actors to promote democratization and to hold governments accountable. A code of conduct and common principles may be needed to ensure accountability and transparency in the work of civil society actors in the Mano River basin.
- Individual organizations need to map out their own mandates in order to avoid weak and incoherent coalitions. Formal collaborations are essential for

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increasing political space and national membership in civil society organizations, but without clear mandates, common visions will be difficult to sustain. In order to build successful partnerships, smaller, individual civic initiatives must develop core, shared values and a common agenda.

Building Strong Collaborative Networks: Community-based organizations, women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, human rights groups, religious and traditional leaders, labor unions, professional lobbies, humanitarian groups, and established civil society partnerships, all need to engage more effectively in information-sharing and networking.

- Through more frequent networking, civil society actors and organizations can share their common experiences in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in order to develop and implement policies for peacebuilding and democratic governance throughout West Africa.
- In order to mobilize resources, civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Mano River basin need to develop more innovative approaches to collaborative initiatives. Sharing information will be critical to pooling resources effectively in a climate in which financial and human resources are increasingly limited, and in which donor fatigue may set in.
- The level of networking and information sharing across groups in this area has been generally poor. For example, NGOs engaged in humanitarian relief efforts with access to information on human rights abuses have sometimes been reluctant to share such information with human rights organizations due to concerns among humanitarian NGOs that sharing such information would compromise their neutrality and ability to operate effectively in the field. Despite these limitations, NGOs should develop more innovative approaches to supporting each other's mandates and policies.

The Role of the State in Consolidating Democracy: Activities and programs in the areas of governance and peacebuilding could be more effective if governments in the Mano River area pursue the consolidation of democracy. State-civil society relations are generally more vibrant under a stable government with a leadership that respects democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law.

- Several participants at the IPA meeting argued that civil society actors should hold governments accountable for establishing the rule of law, protecting human and constitutional rights, and strengthening institutions such as the judiciary and police forces.
- International NGOs, governments, donors, the United Nations (UN), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should support civil society-government partnerships. Processes initiated by governments which seek to involve civil society actors and organizations in policy formulation should also be encouraged.

Strengthening State-Civil Society Relations: In countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea that have had a history of violence and instability, civil society actors and organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy and democratization, have often been perceived as opponents of the state, and therefore, subject to punitive measures and scrutiny by governments. As a result of current and past conflicts, civil society actors in the Mano River area have developed various strategies for operating in hostile environments.

- Civil society actors should continue to develop beneficial partnerships with external actors. In particular, organizations working in legal aid, human rights education, advocacy, economic development, disarmament and demobilization, reconciliation, and other activities, can act as implementing partners with UN agencies.
- As a more long-term strategy, civil society organizations should continue to build alliances around common agendas and formal networks. Collaborative arrangements have often allowed civil society actors to operate more effectively at the national level, under cover of a collective identity.
- Civil society actors should take advantage of new entry points in state decision-making processes by engaging parliamentarians and mobilizing support for human rights and governance issues at the community level.

The Role of External Actors: Collaboration between the UN, ECOWAS, and civil society actors must be strengthened. Civil society could become an effective partner in

managing conflicts in the Mano River basin by providing feedback and information for conflict analysis to ECOWAS' early warning system, mobilizing support for peacebuilding activities, and supporting specific national reforms on peace and security issues in the subregion.

- Participants at the IPA meeting welcomed the establishment of a UN office in West Africa (UNOWA) in Dakar, Senegal, in 2002. The office has a mandate to help strengthen ECOWAS' conflict management and electoral capacities and to work with civil society actors in West Africa. The establishment of the office provides an opportunity to enhance peacebuilding institutions and collaborations throughout the subregion. The office could also increase networking between civil society actors in the MRU countries, ECOWAS, and the UN.
- The presence of a UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) provides an opportunity for innovative collaboration between civil society actors and the UN in the areas of human rights monitoring, good governance, and peacebuilding. The UN's peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau, which operates under a similar mandate, has carried out a range of human rights and peacebuilding activities in partnership with civil society actors. Future UN peacebuilding offices must work with local civil society actors to develop strategies for implementing their mandates.
- Collaboration between civil society actors, ECOWAS, and the UN must focus on broader peace and security issues, rather than just on specific peace processes. Civil society organizations can be useful partners for governments and the UN in the regulation of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Local NGOs, in partnership with ECOWAS and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), could work to mobilize support for the ECOWAS Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons of 1998, and lobby national parliamentarians to establish effective commissions for the regulation of these arms.
- ECOWAS leaders must work closely with civil society actors and organizations in enhancing the 1999 ECOWAS security mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, particularly since these actors are often closest to conflicts and can contribute directly to conflict prevention efforts.
- Civil society actors can assist in designing ECOWAS and UN policies and programs in the areas of early warning and conflict prevention. ECOWAS has established observation bureaus in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, and Liberia. Civil society organizations in the Mano River Union countries can feed information and analyses through their subregional networks to these offices.

1. The Evolution of a Conflict Management Role for Civil Society Actors in the Mano River Union

On 14 June 2002, the International Peace Academy's (IPA) Africa Program convened a Civil Society Dialogue in New York titled "Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union." The purpose of the meeting was to draw on the experiences of civil society actors who have been involved in conflict management efforts in the three Mano River Union (MRU) countries – Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The meeting provided a platform for civil society leaders from the MRU countries to share information and analyses with the United Nations (UN) community in New York on the consolidation of democracy in West Africa, the role of civil society in peacebuilding, and challenges for improving the effectiveness of civil society actors in the Mano River basin. This report contains discussions from this Civil Society Dialogue as well as further research.

The discussions at the IPA meeting focused on the increasing role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the areas of governance and peacebuilding. Participants generally agreed that civil society is comprised of numerous civic initiatives including community-based organizations (CBOs), women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, human rights groups, religious and traditional leaders, labor unions, student groups, professional lobbies, and humanitarian groups. Civil society actors and groups generally engage in civic activities that contest, mediate, and influence the state and undertake initiatives designed to affect positively the political, cultural, and socio-economic dynamics of their countries. Unlike political parties, civil society organizations do not aim to wrest power away from governments. CSOs have become a critical element in peacebuilding and national reconciliation processes in Africa.¹

Conflict in the Mano River Union

Persistent violent conflict in the Mano River Union countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea during the



left to right: Dr. Ba Foday Suma, ABC Development, Conakry, Guinea; Mr. Benedict Sannoh, Center for Law and Human Rights Education, Monrovia, Liberia; Dr. Amos Sawyer, Indiana University, Indiana; and Ms. Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Freetown, Sierra Leone

1990s has given rise to the development of civil society organizations that are increasingly involved in conflict management and peacebuilding activities. Civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone fed on each other, spilling across the subregion's porous borders and precipitating further escalation of conflicts. The Liberian civil war resulted in 200,000 deaths and spilled 750,000 refugees into neighboring countries, while Sierra Leone's civil conflict resulted in 70,000 deaths and spilled 500,000 refugees across its borders. The movement of refugees and internally displaced persons, the flow of arms, and competition over diamonds, iron ore, rubber, and other resources, have contributed to political and economic tensions between Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Plagued by civil strife, these countries share common structural problems that have contributed to conflicts: a lack of democratic empowerment of citizens, a denial of human rights, widespread corruption, and poor governance. These structural gaps have created a vacuum which has been filled by plundering warlords and renegade militias. As a consequence of the subregion's crises, civil society organizations in the Mano River area have increasingly become involved in conflict management activities, pursuing common peacebuilding agendas and constituting a subregional network of NGO actors.

¹ See John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (eds.), *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); John W. Harbeson, Donald Rothchild, and Naomi Chazan (eds.), *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994); International Peace Academy (IPA) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), *Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa: Report of the IPA/OAU Consultation*, (Capetown: June 1996); and Augustine Toure, *The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, (New York: IPA, April 2002).

Liberia

The Liberian civil war erupted in December 1989, when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) attempted to overthrow Samuel Doe's autocratic regime, which had been in place since 1980. Brutal counter-insurgency efforts initiated by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) since 1985 led to inter-ethnic violence in 1990 between the Krahn-dominated AFL and the NPFL's largely Gio and Mano fighters. Mandingos were also targeted by the NPFL as allies of Doe. The NPFL fighters were supported by Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. From the outset, the civil war had a regional dimension, precipitating an intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS intervention relied on a subregional peacekeeping force in the form of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which entered Liberia in September 1990. ECOWAS adopted a formula based on civil society recommendations and called for an immediate ceasefire, a military force for monitoring the ceasefire, and the establishment of a neutral interim government to prepare for free and fair elections.² After the failure of eleven peace agreements, the August 1995 Abuja accord eventually helped to halt the civil war by including the leaders of the armed factions in a transitional government, which eventually led to the election of Taylor as president in July 1997.³ However, Charles Taylor's election neither guaranteed peace in Liberia nor in the subregion. He continued to support Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in a destructive arms-for-diamonds trade, and in turn accused Guinea of supporting Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels who attacked Liberia in 1999 and continue to threaten Taylor's regime. In response to rebel attacks on Monrovia in 2002, Taylor declared a state of emergency on 8 February 2002, and conscripted hundreds of new recruits.⁴ The state of emergency was lifted in September 2002, but instability continues to affect a third of Liberia's territory.

Sierra Leone

Civil war erupted in Sierra Leone in March 1991, when the rebel RUF, which consisted of unemployed Sierra Leonean youth as well as former fighters of the NPFL in Liberia, attempted to overthrow the government in Freetown of General Joseph Momoh, who had inherited a fragile army and a weak economy from the autocratic Siaka Stevens. Two peace initiatives in Abidjan in November 1996, and - after a military coup in May 1997- in Conakry in October 1997, undertaken by ECOWAS members, failed to secure peace. A Nigerian-led ECOMOG force reversed the military coup in February 1998, but was unable to defeat the rebels. The conflict was eventually ended three years after the signing of the July 1999 Lomé peace agreement, when the government and the RUF, which had control of nearly half of the country, agreed to form a government of national unity.⁵ The UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which was established to implement the 1999 Lomé agreement, and was charged with helping to demobilize and disarm the RUF and other combatants, eventually helped to re-establish government authority in the entire country. Based on a provision in the Lomé agreement, a legislative act in 2000 established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with the four principal objectives of recording human rights violations and abuses during the conflict, examining the root causes of the conflict, addressing impunity, and promoting national reconciliation.⁶ On 14 May 2002, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was re-elected as president in a landslide victory in which the RUF won less than two percent of the vote.

Guinea

Guinea's strong sense of national unity and patriotism was solidified during the Cold War era, when the country adopted its own brand of socialism. Under the presidency of Ahmed Sékou Touré from 1958, strong national unity and patriotic sentiment developed in Guinea after Touré

² Samuel Kofi Woods II, "Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process," in Jeremy Armon and Andy Carl (eds.), *The Liberian Peace Process 1990-1996*, (London: ACCORD, Conciliation Resources, Issue 1/1996), pp. 27-36.

³ See Augustine Toure, *The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, pp. 10-12.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Back to the Brink: War Crimes by Liberian Government and Rebels*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, May 2002); [available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/liberia/>]; and International Crisis Group, *Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm*, (Freetown and Brussels: International Crisis Group, April 2003); [available from http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/africa/westafrica/reports/A400960_30042003.pdf].

⁵ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), pp. 71-83.

⁶ See the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act*, The Sierra Leonean parliamentary act establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in line with Article XXIV of the Lomé Peace Agreement, 22 February 2000.

defied colonial France to vote for independence in a referendum. However, Touré eliminated political opposition, established a one-party state, destroyed traditional institutions of chieftaincy, and politicized the military and civil service. Simultaneously, social services and infrastructure development were stymied, and government services became corrupt. Nearly one million Guineans fled the country during Touré's twenty-six year reign. Guinea's founding president died in 1984, and a new government was established following a bloodless military coup, led by General Lansana Conté. Continued disturbances on the country's borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia have contributed to internal unrest. The conflict in Sierra Leone spilled over into Guinea, and by October 2000, Liberian factions were engaged in battles with LURD rebels on the Guinean border, resulting in the displacement of thousands of people and creating a humanitarian emergency. 500,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia entered Guinea in the 1990s, increasing its internal ethnic tensions and straining the country's fragile economy. As a consequence of Côte d'Ivoire's descent into civil war with an attempted *coup d'état* in September 2002, about 16,500 Liberians, Ivorians, and other African nationals have fled to Guinea. 52,000 Guineans also returned home from Côte d'Ivoire.⁷ In addition to the destabilizing effects of these refugee flows, many observers have raised concerns about the country's democratization process. Guinea's opposition boycotted a controversial referendum in November 2001 as well as parliamentary elections in June 2002.⁸

2. Prospects and Challenges for Civil Society in the Mano River Union

Civil society's critical engagement with peacemaking efforts in the MRU has helped to open up debates on democratic governance, including demands for accountability, transparency, and popular participation. As a consequence of the marches, rallies, negotiations, and peace campaigns in response to civil conflicts, military rule and poor governance, human rights advocates and other civil society actors in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea have made some progress in expanding political



Ms. Ruth Sando Perry, Former President of Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia

space and participation for non-state actors in the governance process.

Growing partnerships and networking among civil society actors and organizations in the Mano River area have also resulted from violent conflicts in the subregion. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, interdenominational religious bodies and women's groups have played useful and important roles in conflict management and peacebuilding at the community and national levels. Subregional initiatives and partnerships among other sections of civil society in the MRU countries have also been pursued. Notwithstanding this progress, the conditions under which the MRU's civil society has developed and operate differ from country to country, and therefore present different challenges for conflict management efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Liberia

The success of civil society initiatives during the peace process of the early 1990s laid the foundation for the creation of the Mano River civil society movement, as well as the Women Peace Network. Prominent civil society leaders in Liberia, including Amos Sawyer, David Kpomakpor, Wilton Sankawulo, and Ruth Sando Perry, served as heads of the Interim Government of National

⁷ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Guinea Humanitarian Update*, 31 January 2003, [available from: http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/069fd6a1ac64ae63c125671c002f7289/8581_9abaacb01f9985256cbf005a48c6?OpenDocument]; and OCHA, "Guinea: Focus on Population Influx from Côte d'Ivoire," 20 February 2002, [available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=32156>].

⁸ Amnesty International, *Guinea: Maintaining Order with Contempt to the Right for Life*, (London: Amnesty International, May 2002); [available from <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR290012002?open&of=ENG-GIN>]; and "Low Turnout in Guinea Poll," *BBC News*, 20 June 2002, [available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2075060.stm>].

Unity (IGNU) between 1990 and 1994. Human rights and pro-democracy organizations were established during Amos Sawyer's presidency. The Liberia Human Rights Chapter, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Center for Law and Human Rights Education, were all involved in advocacy, monitoring, investigation, and reporting on human rights violations on a national scale. Women's groups such as the Association of Female Lawyers (AFELL) and the Liberia Women Initiative (LWI) were involved in advocacy, human rights, governance, and pro-democracy activities. Humanitarian and relief organizations, in partnership with religious institutions, asserted themselves in the post-conflict peacebuilding sector. During this period, an active and vocal media also emerged in Liberia.

Under Charles Taylor's rule from 1997, Liberia's judiciary and legislative institutions have been kept deliberately weak and incapable of effectively balancing the power of the executive. The country continues to be wracked by violence and instability, and several civil society organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy and democratization, have been branded opponents of the government and foreign agents, and therefore, subject to punitive measures and close scrutiny. The press has come under censorship, journalists have been arrested without due process, and pro-democracy and human rights advocates have been intimidated, arrested, jailed, and, in some cases, reportedly tortured.⁹

On 6 May 2002, the UN Security Council renewed sanctions against Charles Taylor's government. The sanctions had been imposed a year earlier in order to halt Taylor's support for the RUF. They included an embargo on arms exports to Liberia, a ban on diamond exports from Liberia, and a travel ban on selected Liberian government and military officials. Several participants at the IPA meeting felt that sanctions against Liberia should remain in place, given Charles Taylor's continuing ability to exploit the country's timber and other natural resources in order to purchase arms and destabilize the subregion further. Others felt that the sanctions were originally established in response to Taylor's support of RUF rebels and that the end of the war in Sierra Leone in

2002 had removed the major justification for sanctions. Participants who opposed sanctions argued that RUF fighters had been disarmed and demobilized and that the RUF had begun transforming itself into an official political party.¹⁰ Opponents of sanctions also felt that Taylor was using them as an excuse to continue to neglect the humanitarian needs of Liberian citizens. Several participants noted that Taylor has skillfully used sanctions to convince Liberians that the international community - and not his government - is responsible for their increased hardships.

Several NGOs which serve as instruments for Taylor's regime and disseminate government propaganda, have been created by the government. This has further disrupted collective efforts by civil society to promote democratization in Liberia. Several participants called for a code of conduct or common principles and standards to be adopted by civil society organizations and NGOs, which would help to enforce accountability and transparency in the operations and agendas of these organizations.

Sierra Leone

Diplomatic efforts to broker peace between the government of Sierra Leone and RUF rebels were both complemented and preceded by initiatives by civil society groups and individuals. By 1994, it was clear that the civil war, that had raged since 1991, was having a negative impact on the lives of women. This encouraged the Women's Forum, a network of women's organizations including the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Association for National Development (WAND), the Women's Wing of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, the National Displaced Women's Organization, women traders groups, and Muslim women's associations,¹¹ to undertake activities that had previously been considered too political. Early in 1995, nearly sixty NGOs and civil society groups came together to form the National Co-ordinating Committee for Peace (NCCP). Organizations such as the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP), the Supreme Islamic Council, the Council of Churches, the Labour Congress, the Teachers Union, and members of Sierra

⁹ Augustine Toure, *The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, p. 13; and Amnesty International, *Liberia: West African Human Rights Defenders Under Attack*, (London: Amnesty International, September 2001); [available from <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR340072001?open&of=ENG-LBR>].

¹⁰ "UN Renews Liberia Sanctions," *BBC News*, 7 May 2002, [available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1972250.stm>].

¹¹ Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, "Sierra Leonean Women and the Peace Process," in David Lord, (ed.), *Paying the Price: The Sierra Leone Peace Process*, (London: ACCORD, Conciliation Resources, Issue 9, 2000).

Leone's diaspora, actively engaged in conflict management activities. Formed in 1997, the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), brought together the country's Muslims and Christians and worked energetically to bridge the gap between warring factions and the civilian population.

While it is difficult to measure the impact of their conflict management efforts, the fact remains that, despite a lack of sustained support and internal organizational challenges, Sierra Leone's civil society actors contributed to these efforts in useful ways.¹² Civil society groups pressured the military to organize elections and hand power back to civilians in February 1996, helped to legitimize the negotiation process that led to the Abidjan accord in November 1996, and worked with their counterparts in Liberia during the Lomé negotiations of July 1999.¹³

Since 2000, several civil society groups have been actively engaged in promoting human rights in Sierra Leone. Numerous initiatives have focused on training, advocacy, and capacity-building, which are integral to issues of transitional justice. However, these activities are focused on "first generation" human rights, namely civil and political rights. Several participants at the IPA meeting highlighted the fact that Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which relies on the input of civil society to examine the root causes of the conflict, will not be able to fulfill its mandate effectively if issues of poverty and inequality are not urgently addressed. There are fewer civil society initiatives addressing "second generation" and "third generation" human rights issues such as the right to work, health, environment, and peace which are central to promoting economic justice and governance and to reconciliation and healing processes. According to several participants, examination of the underlying root causes of previous coups and rebellions in Sierra Leone, such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, and unfair distribution of resources, have been neglected.

While Sierra Leone's civil society organizations have been partly successful in undertaking post-conflict peacebuilding activities, several weaknesses in their institutional infrastructure continue to hamper their efforts. Sierra Leone's civil society organizations, in particular the larger NGOs, have developed unevenly,

with resources distributed unequally and a strong focus on professionalism as opposed to volunteerism. Activities in the areas of human rights, humanitarian relief, and economic development sectors dominated by NGOs, are starved of resources. NGOs rely on professional, salaried staff, and less on community volunteers. As a result, these organizations compete for scarce resources and develop insulated networks of like-minded professionals. Because they do not maintain strong, consistent ties to local constituencies and engage in community mobilization, the development of Sierra Leone's civil society sector is unlikely to be sustainable in the long run.

Guinea

During Ahmed Sékou Touré's rule between 1958 and 1984, Guinea became a one-party state, with limited freedom of expression and intolerance of political opposition. Touré's Malinke ethnic group dominated the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) and senior government posts. In this environment, civil society actors were branded opponents of government and often became victims of government repression. After Touré's death, Lansana Conté's Military Committee of National Recovery (CMRN) formed a transitional government and crafted a new constitution in 1984. Conté attempted to reform state-civil society relations, but failed to address issues of civil and political freedoms, and focused almost exclusively on establishing a free-market economy under conditions of political autocracy. It was not until a December 1990 referendum that legal and constitutional arrangements were instituted in Guinea to address issues of civil and political freedoms. Under pressure from external donors, the government started to allow the establishment of political parties and began the process of organizing elections.

Guinea's first multi-party elections took place in 1993 and were considered to be seriously flawed by national and international observers. This flawed process encouraged reformers to support the establishment of various civil society organizations, several of which continue to be active in the areas of conflict management and peacebuilding. However, this transition from a closed system of governance to a supposedly more open system failed to establish a vibrant multi-party political order. A referendum in November 2001, which was boycotted by

¹² Lord, (ed.), *Paying the Price: The Sierra Leone Peace Process*, pp. 43-45.

¹³ Thomas Mark Turay, "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: The Role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone," in *Ibid.*, pp. 50-54.

the opposition, pushed through a new constitution that extended the presidential term from five to seven years.

In order to address two conflicting tensions - first, the reverberations from conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and second, internal unrest triggered by the government's repressive response to this situation - civil society organizations have focused their energies on addressing the subregion's humanitarian crisis, as well as providing conflict management and peacebuilding training and advocacy to local communities. In September 2000, Conté called on Guineans to repel attacks by rebel groups based in Sierra Leone along the country's borders. In a speech on national radio, Conté urged Guineans to defend their territory from "foreign invaders." The speech was interpreted as a rousing call to arms against foreign refugees and, with the explicit approval of the state, Guinean soldiers and civil defence groups attempted to drive out hundreds of refugees from Guinea.¹⁴

Civil society groups such as the National Committee for Action and Reflection for Peace in the MRU States (CORAPEM), a consortium of nearly fifty groups which had previously focused on development activities, began to forge networks and partnerships in the subregion.¹⁵ In 2001, CORAPEM established some commissions at the initiative of the Lansana Conté Foundation for Peace, an organization tied to Guinea's president. The commissions promoted dialogue around the negotiation and mediation of subregional conflicts. The initiative between CORAPEM and the Lansana Conté Foundation for Peace illustrates one aspect of state-civil society relations in Guinea. Several participants at the IPA meeting noted that the survival of civil society organizations in Guinea depends on explicit approval from the government.

ABC Development, a civil society organization based in Kambia, a Sierra Leonean town which borders Guinea, has focused its efforts on assisting refugee communities on both sides of the conflict. In response to a growing refugee population, ABC has attempted to sensitize host communities to the plight of refugees from both countries, and has established a conflict resolution center and trauma healing counseling services for refugees. The

organization's objectives include: encouraging confidence-building, sensitization, and the dissemination of information on refugees. ABC continues to coordinate peacebuilding activities, playing a critical role in conflict management efforts in the subregion.

Civil Society Partnerships

The operational benefits of civil society partnerships, alliances, and coalitions include the ability to pool financial and human resources. Strong partnerships also allow smaller organizations and civic initiatives to unite around a core group of values and to advocate for change within a national context, with the goal of influencing government decisions. It is important to distinguish between multisectoral collaborations, such as coalitions between human rights, humanitarian, and women's groups, and collective groups which are based on one constituency such as labor unions.

Liberia

Several Liberian human rights organizations, by 1994, had created a Consortium of Human Rights Organizations, with the primary goal of enhancing the collective security of its members, avoiding overlapping and duplication of activities, and increasing access to, and support from, the UN Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL) which was mandated to monitor the human rights situation in Liberia and the compliance of the parties with the July 1993 Cotonou peace agreement. Similarly, religious groups collaborated through the Inter-Faith Mediation Council, with the objective of supporting Liberia's peace process.¹⁶ Relief and humanitarian organizations also forged cooperation among themselves, particularly in partnership with international non-governmental organizations.

Sierra Leone

In terms of common strategies and networking among Sierra Leone's civil society groups, coalitions have brought together disparate actors and organizations such as trade unions, students, churches, and women's organizations. These alliances were forged during Sierra Leone's civil war (between 1991 and 2002) and in the

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Guinea: Refugees Still at Risk: Continuing Refugee Protection Concerns in Guinea*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 2001); [available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/guinea/>].

¹⁵ For a discussion of Guinea's civil society organizations, see the IPA report for the Ford Foundation, *The Infrastructure of Peace in Africa: Assessing the Peacebuilding Capacity of African Institutions*, (New York: IPA, September 2002), pp. 45 and 68.

¹⁶ Samuel Kofi Woods II, "Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process," pp. 27-36.

push toward democratization and elections. Partly due to the success of the presidential elections in May 2002, which were declared by national and international observers as having been “free and fair”, some of the country’s civil society alliances have begun to fragment along specific agendas of individual civil society organizations. While some participants at the IPA meeting felt that disintegration of partnerships would weaken civil society’s collective impact on government policy, others suggested that this fragmentation reflected real interests on the ground, and they noted that permanent alliances between different NGOs could become artificial and unsustainable in the long run. Several participants also opined that, in the absence of the opportunity to build institutional capacity, strong personalities might dominate civil society organizations and their alliances, thus jeopardizing the potential for building flexible coalitions during periods of difficult economic conditions and/or extreme political repression.

Guinea

While current Guinean civil society organizations remain institutionally weak, they have successfully collaborated with civil society actors in Liberia and Sierra Leone. As a result of interaction within the subregion, and because of the relative stability of Guinea (at least in relation to its two Mano River neighbors), its civil society organizations and NGOs have hosted a large number of seminars and workshops on conflict management and peacebuilding issues. This work has emboldened some Guinean civil society organizations in the areas of national peacebuilding and conflict resolution, encouraging them to begin addressing these issues at a national level.

The State and Civil Society

Liberia

During the presidency of Charles Taylor since July 1997, political space has narrowed for civil society organizations in Liberia. Several factors related to Taylor’s autocratic leadership style and his government’s interaction with internal and external actors, have damaged Liberia’s democratization efforts. Taylor has re-instituted a system of political patronage modeled on the leadership style of Winston Tubman (who was Liberia’s president between 1944 and 1971), and at first consulted informally

with “eminent personalities and opinion leaders”. This process was neither transparent, nor fully participatory, and yet members of the group were described by the government as representatives of Liberia’s civil society. Second, Charles Taylor has also failed to restructure Liberia’s army and security services, and stacked these institutions with his former NPFL fighters. Several observers at the IPA meeting noted that Taylor’s failure to undertake security sector reform is related to persistent and egregious human rights abuses which have created a climate that is un conducive to national reconciliation. Finally, Taylor’s energies have been focused on combating the rebel group, LURD, which has been involved in intimidation, harassment, and violence against Liberia’s civilian population. As Liberia’s downward spiral threatens to turn the country into a conflict-ridden failed state, political space for civil society organizations has narrowed even further and state-civil society relations have become increasingly fragile.

Sierra Leone

The relationship between civil society and the state in Sierra Leone has been historically defined as oppositional. This relationship first developed out of civil society’s early coalitions in the 1960s and has affected civil society’s development and relationship with the state. Under Siaka Stevens’ rule (between 1968 and 1985), the politicization of civil society and the characterization of dissent as a threat to the state led to violence by state security agents against elements of civil society such as student groups, trade unions, and professional associations.¹⁷ Consequently, civil society actors were stigmatized as political opponents rather than as neutral actors. Some participants at the IPA meeting argued that Sierra Leone’s NGOs missed an opportunity to broaden their political space during the 1960s and 1970s. In some ways, this period of violence and suppression of civil society resulted in the crippling of civic activities. Additionally, civil society groups failed to demonstrate that interventions originating from the civic space could be ‘apolitical’ and could support the development of the Sierra Leonean state and society.

Guinea

While there has been some broadening of political space in Guinea, many observers have noted that vibrant

¹⁷ Fred Hayward, “Sierra Leone: State Consolidation, Fragmentation, and Decay,” in Donal B. Cruise O’Brien, John Dunn, and Richard Rathbone (eds.), *Contemporary West African States*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

political debate by parliament and the emergence of a free press have yet to occur. Some participants noted that politics in Guinea continues to be polarized around personalities and ethnic disputes rather than around concrete political platforms. During the presidential election of 1998 when Alpha Condé, the leading opposition leader, was arrested, Guinean security forces also arrested and harassed several other opposition activists and supporters.¹⁸ The instability that erupted before the adoption of the new Guinean constitution following a referendum in November 2001, also raised concerns about the role of civil society and its relationship to the state.¹⁹ Finally, participants at the IPA meeting noted that, while the Guinean state actively supports multilateral peacebuilding initiatives under external actors - such as its cooperation with UN initiatives in Guinea - politicians and the governing elite have claimed a monopoly on such peacebuilding activities, and have excluded or limited civil society participation in such activities.

3. Civil Society Partnerships in the Mano River Union: The Role of External Actors

Participants at the IPA meeting highlighted a number of lessons based on interactions between ECOWAS and the UN, and among ECOWAS, the UN, and civil society during conflict management efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.²⁰

Major challenges to collaboration between ECOWAS, the UN, and civil society organizations in the Mano River basin are reflected in past experiences. First, the peace processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone managed by ECOWAS, the UN, and civil society organizations highlighted some common weaknesses and difficulties. One participant at the IPA meeting noted that both ECOWAS and the UN failed to recognize conflict dynamics in Liberia and Sierra Leone which were obvious to CSOs working in local communities.²¹

National, subregional, and external actors have had difficulty in coordinating diverse mandates and rules of

engagement. This has made it particularly difficult for the UN to coordinate its activities with ECOWAS, as well as to collaborate with civil society actors and NGOs on the ground. Poor coordination and collaboration have also limited the capacity for organizations to exploit fully their comparative advantages and to share the burden of peacebuilding and peacekeeping in an equitable manner.

Collaboration between civil society, ECOWAS, and the UN is essential. Several participants at the IPA meeting noted that identifying entry points for collaboration which enhances the role of civil society in peacebuilding, is critical for taking advantage of ECOWAS' understanding of the regional context, the UN's widespread legitimacy and greater resources, and civil society's local and national knowledge of these countries. One participant noted that ECOWAS and the UN have expended the majority of their resources on supporting government initiatives rather than those of civil society. Another participant suggested that the UN and ECOWAS should support recommendations for peacebuilding and conflict management proposed by civil society actors in the Mano River area and act as a bridge between civil society and governments. ECOWAS and the UN should also support local peacebuilding initiatives spearheaded by civil society groups. They should respond to information and feedback on conflict dynamics from grassroots and national civil society networks, act as impartial and neutral intermediaries between the state and civil society, and mobilize donor support for civil society initiatives and projects. Simultaneously, civil society organizations and networks should develop clear mandates and define their specific roles in the areas of conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Without a clear articulation of these roles, it will be difficult for ECOWAS and the UN to collaborate effectively with civil society actors on the ground.

There are distinct operational levels of interaction between ECOWAS, the UN, and civil society groups which have developed from new conceptions of human security. An enhanced partnership between civil society

¹⁸ Amnesty International, *Guinea: Maintaining Order with Contempt to the Right for Life*, p.3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

²⁰ See Adekeye Adebajo, *Liberia's Civil War: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and Regional Security in West Africa*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimensions of an African Civil War*, (London: Hurst, 1999); and John Hirsch, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

²¹ The relationship between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations (UN), and civil society organizations was addressed in Kwesi Anings' presentation, "Arenas for Collaboration: The UN, ECOWAS and Civil Society Organizations in West Africa," at the IPA Civil Society Dialogue, *Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union*, in New York, on 14 June 2002.

organizations, ECOWAS, and the UN, is related to a revised definition of security, which stresses human security rather than more traditional state-centric military issues. A human security framework is a people-centered approach, which accounts for the impact of military (e.g. civil war, small arms proliferation, communal-based violence) and non-military sources (e.g. human rights violations, famine, infectious diseases) of conflicts on communities, and underscores the interconnected nature and impact of seemingly unrelated issues such as human rights violations, conflict, mass migration, and poverty, on civilian populations.²² Human security is a departure from traditional state-centered security analyses and priorities, and consequently accommodates civil society's numerous priorities and operational structures relating to democratization and governance, development and poverty reduction, and peace and security. This framework can be used to integrate the work of ECOWAS, the UN, and NGOs in the Mano River Union countries.

Entry-points for Collaboration

Early Warning: Since civil society actors are often closest to conflicts and can thus contribute directly and early to conflict prevention efforts, ECOWAS leaders should work closely with civil society actors and organizations to develop the ECOWAS security mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, adopted in Lomé in December 1999.²³ Civil society actors can assist in designing ECOWAS and UN policies and programs in the areas of prevention, peacebuilding, and development. As part of its early warning system, ECOWAS has established zonal observation bureaus in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, and Liberia to monitor and supply information to its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. The ECOWAS early warning system was established with the involvement of the African Strategic and Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG), a Nigerian policy institute. AFSTRAG convened a forum of about twenty-six West African NGOs in Abuja, in March 2001, which led to the establishment of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). WANEP plans to contribute

actively to ECOWAS' early warning system by establishing zonal coordinating offices in Freetown and Dakar. AFSTRAG and WANEP's contribution to the ECOWAS early warning system presents an opportunity, as well as a possible model, for collaboration between West Africa's civil society actors and ECOWAS.

Civil society organizations in the Mano River Union countries can enhance the effectiveness of the ECOWAS early warning system by feeding information and analysis through their subregional networks to the ECOWAS zonal observation bureau offices. In order to do this effectively, civil society organizations will have to develop flexible networks.²⁴ It is critical that civil society groups establish effective mechanisms for receiving and analyzing such information before passing it on to ECOWAS. Several participants at the IPA meeting argued that ECOWAS' early warning systems must be made more transparent and open to views from civil society. Civil society organizations and actors will need to be able to access proper channels of communication in order to provide timely information and analysis to ECOWAS. This process will be more successful if ECOWAS and the UN establish clear channels of communication, identifying key offices and contacts for their civil society partners on the ground.

Peacebuilding: In 2002, the UN established a West Africa office (UNOWA) in Dakar, Senegal, and appointed a Special Representative, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, to head this office. The establishment of the office is an opportunity to enhance peacebuilding institutions and collaborations throughout the subregion. Some participants at the IPA meeting expressed hope that the creation of this office could be a positive step for ECOWAS/UN cooperation. The UN office in West Africa has been mandated to help strengthen ECOWAS' peacekeeping and electoral capacities and to work with civil society actors in West Africa. The office will perform the following specific tasks: assist the UN and its subregional offices to coordinate strategies in West Africa; monitor and report on subregional political, humanitarian and human rights developments; harmonize UN activities with those of ECOWAS; monitor ECOWAS' decisions and activities; and

²² For an analysis of the concept and policy implications of human security, see the discussion paper from the Third Annual Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)/ Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Peacebuilding Consultations, "Elements of the Concept of Human Security: A Discussion Paper," (Ottawa: DFAIT, 15 January 1999), [available from <http://www.cpcc.ottawa.on.ca/humansec.html>].

²³ See the reports of the policy seminars by IPA and ECOWAS, *Toward a Pax West Africana: Building Peace in a Troubled Subregion*, Abuja, Nigeria, September 2001; and *Operationalizing the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security*, Dakar, Senegal, August 2002.

²⁴ Kwesi Aning, "Arenas for Collaboration: The UN, ECOWAS and Civil Society Organizations in West Africa."

support national and subregional peacebuilding efforts.²⁵ Ultimately, a strong UN presence in West Africa that can coordinate and augment peacebuilding and conflict management activities in the subregion, could be of great value to the unstable Mano River basin. The office could also increase networking between civil society actors in the MRU countries, ECOWAS, and the UN.

The presence of a UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) also represents an opportunity for innovative collaboration between civil society and the UN. The peacebuilding office, which was established in 1997, is one of two offices in West Africa (the other is in Guinea-Bissau), and is mandated to provide electoral assistance; promote human rights and the rule of law; mobilize donor support for disarmament, demobilization, and the reintegration of ex-combatants into local communities; and support rehabilitation and reconstruction of infrastructure. The UN office in Liberia should work more closely with local civil society actors to develop strategies for implementing its mandate. Its counterpart, the UN peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), has been able to undertake a broad range of human rights and peacebuilding activities by interpreting its mandate more flexibly and working with civil society groups more effectively. Enhanced collaboration with civil society actors in Liberia could result in a similar broadening of UNOL's activities to increase the promotion of human rights and the rule of law. Both peacebuilding offices can contribute to strengthening democratic institutions such as the judiciary and police forces in Liberia and Guinea-Bissau. Simultaneously, civil society actors should initiate cooperation with the UN's peacebuilding offices, particularly by prioritizing complementary peacebuilding initiatives.

Small Arms and Light Weapons: Collaboration between civil society, ECOWAS, and the UN should also focus on broader peace and security issues, rather than solely on specific peace processes. One participant at the IPA meeting suggested that civil society organizations could be useful partners for governments and international organizations in the collection of illicit small arms, mapping areas of manufacture, harmonizing legislation on small arms, and promoting national legislation regulating the flow of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. Civil society groups, in partnership with ECOWAS and the UN Development Programme (UNDP),

could work together to mobilize support for the ECOWAS Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons of 1998, and lobby parliamentarians for the establishment of effective national commissions to control the flow of these weapons under the Moratorium.

4. Conclusions

Participants at the IPA Civil Society Dialogue examined the increasing role of civil society organizations in governance and peacebuilding. These organizations have become a critical element in conflict management and peacebuilding processes in Africa. Several themes and recommendations emerged from these discussions:

Developing Clear Mandates and Building a National Constituency: Civil society organizations should develop clear mandates in defining their peacebuilding and conflict prevention, management, and resolution priorities in order to build effective alliances and mobilize national constituencies.

- Participants at the IPA meeting noted that several civil society organizations, created by national governments in the Mano River Union, have disrupted collective efforts by civil society actors to promote democratization and to hold governments accountable. A code of conduct and common principles may be needed to ensure accountability and transparency in the work of civil society actors in the Mano River basin.
- Individual organizations need to map out their own mandates in order to avoid weak and incoherent coalitions. Formal collaborations are essential for increasing political space and national membership in civil society organizations, but without clear mandates, common visions will be difficult to sustain. In order to build successful partnerships, smaller, individual civic initiatives must develop core, shared values and a common agenda.

Building Strong Collaborative Networks: Community-based organizations, women's groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, human rights groups, religious and traditional leaders, labor unions,

²⁵ Report of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa, "Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Durable and Sustainable Solutions to Priority Needs and Challenges in West Africa," UN Security Council document, 7 May 2001, S/2001/434, p. 15.

professional lobbies, humanitarian groups, and established civil society partnerships, all need to engage more effectively in information-sharing and networking.

- Through more frequent networking, civil society actors and organizations can share their common experiences in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in order to develop and implement policies for peacebuilding and democratic governance throughout West Africa.
- In order to mobilize resources, civil society organizations in the Mano River basin need to develop more innovative approaches to collaborative initiatives. Sharing information will be critical to pooling resources effectively in a climate in which financial and human resources are increasingly limited, and in which donor fatigue may set in.
- The level of networking and information sharing across groups in this area has been generally poor. For example, NGOs engaged in humanitarian relief efforts with access to information on human rights abuses have sometimes been reluctant to share such information with human rights organizations due to concerns among humanitarian NGOs that sharing such information would compromise their neutrality and ability to operate effectively in the field. Despite these limitations, NGOs should develop more innovative approaches to supporting each other's mandates and policies.

The Role of the State in Consolidating Democracy: Activities and programs in the areas of governance and peacebuilding could be more effective if governments in the Mano River area pursue the consolidation of democracy. State-civil society relations are generally more vibrant under a stable government with a leadership that respects democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law.

- Several participants at the IPA meeting argued that civil society actors should hold governments accountable for establishing the rule of law, protecting human and constitutional rights, and strengthening institutions such as the judiciary and police forces.
- International NGOs, governments, donors, the UN, and ECOWAS should support civil society-government partnerships. Processes initiated by govern-

ments which seek to involve civil society actors and organizations in policy formulation should also be encouraged.

Strengthening State-Civil Society Relations: In countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea that have had a history of violence and instability, civil society actors and organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy and democratization, have often been perceived as opponents of the state, and therefore, subject to punitive measures and scrutiny by governments. As a result of current and past conflicts, civil society actors in the Mano River area have developed various strategies for operating in hostile environments.

- Civil society actors should continue to develop beneficial partnerships with external actors. In particular, organizations working in legal aid, human rights education, advocacy, economic development, disarmament and demobilization, reconciliation, and other activities, can act as implementing partners with UN agencies.
- As a more long-term strategy, civil society organizations should continue to build alliances around common agendas and formal networks. Collaborative arrangements have often allowed civil society actors to operate more effectively at the national level, under cover of a collective identity.
- Civil society actors should take advantage of new entry points in state decision-making processes by engaging parliamentarians and mobilizing support for human rights and governance issues at the community level.

The Role of External Actors: Collaboration between the UN, ECOWAS, and civil society actors must be strengthened. Civil society could become an effective partner in managing conflicts in the Mano River basin by providing feedback and information for conflict analysis to ECOWAS' early warning system, mobilizing support for peacebuilding activities, and supporting specific national reforms on peace and security issues in the subregion.

- Participants at the IPA meeting welcomed the establishment of a UN office in West Africa (UNOWA) in Dakar, Senegal, in 2002. The office has a mandate to help strengthen ECOWAS' conflict

management and electoral capacities and to work with civil society actors in West Africa. The establishment of the office provides an opportunity to enhance peacebuilding institutions and collaborations throughout the subregion. The office could also increase networking between civil society actors in the MRU countries, ECOWAS, and the UN.

- The presence of a UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) provides an opportunity for innovative collaboration between civil society actors and the UN in the areas of human rights monitoring, good governance, and peacebuilding. The UN's peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau, which operates under a similar mandate, has carried out a range of human rights and peacebuilding activities in partnership with civil society actors. Future UN peacebuilding offices must work with local civil society actors to develop strategies for implementing their mandates.
- Collaboration between civil society actors, ECOWAS, and the UN must focus on broader peace and security issues, rather than just on specific peace processes. Civil society organizations can be useful partners for governments and the UN in the regula-

tion of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Local NGOs, in partnership with ECOWAS and the UNDP, could work to mobilize support for the ECOWAS Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons of 1998, and lobby national parliamentarians to establish effective commissions for the regulation of these arms.

- ECOWAS leaders must work closely with civil society actors and organizations in enhancing the 1999 ECOWAS security mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, particularly since these actors are often closest to conflicts and can contribute directly to conflict prevention efforts.
- Civil society actors can assist in designing ECOWAS and UN policies and programs in the areas of early warning and conflict prevention. ECOWAS has established observation bureaus in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, and Liberia. Civil society organizations in the Mano River Union countries can feed information and analyses through their subregional networks to these offices.



Participants at the IPA Civil Society Dialogue, "Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union," 14 June 2002

Annex I

Civil Society Perspectives from the Mano River Union

Millennium Hotel New York UN Plaza
14 June 2002

Agenda

- 9:15 am – 9:30 am **Introductory Remarks**
David M. Malone, International Peace Academy
- 9:30 am – 10:45 am **The State and Civil Society in the Mano River Union:
Building Regional Networks and Partnerships Among Civil Society**
- Chair: **Dr. Amos Sawyer**, Indiana University, Indiana
- Speakers: **Ms. Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff**, Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
Sierra Leone, “The Case of Sierra Leone”
- Mr. Benedict Sannoh**, Center for Law and Human Rights Education,
Liberia, “The Case of Liberia”
- Dr. Ba Foday Suma**, ABC Development, Guinea, “The Case of Guinea”
- 10:45 am – 12:00 pm **Peacebuilding and Democracy in the Mano River Union**
- Chair: **Dr. Adekeye Adebajo**, International Peace Academy
- Speakers: **Mr. Abdul Tejan-Cole**, Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone,
“The Case of Sierra Leone”
- Justice Frances Johnson-Morris**, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission,
Liberia, “The Case of Liberia”
- Dr. Ba Foday Suma**, ABC Development, Guinea, “The Case of Guinea”
- 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm **Lunch and Keynote Address**
- Chair: **Dr. Amos Sawyer**, Indiana University, Indiana
- Keynote Speaker: **Ms. Ruth Sando Perry**, Former President of Liberia,
“Personal Reflections on Peacebuilding in the Mano River Union”

- 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm **Civil Society’s Collaboration with ECOWAS and the UN**
- Chair: **Professor Margaret Vogt**, United Nations Department of Political Affairs, New York
- Speaker: **Dr. Kwesi Aning**, African Security Dialogue and Research Institute, Ghana, “Arenas for Collaboration: The UN, ECOWAS and Civil Society Organizations in West Africa”
- Discussants: **Mr. Abdul Lamin**, Ohio University, Ohio
- Ms. Elizabeth Mulbah**, Mano River Women Peace Network, Liberia
- 2:30 pm – 2:45 pm **Coffee Break**
- 2:45 pm – 4:15 pm **Lessons Learned in Civil Society’s Development**
- Chair: **Dr. James Jonah**, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, City University of New York, New York
- Speakers: **Mr. Alimamy Koroma**, Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone
- Discussants: **Ms. Etweeda Cooper**, Liberia Women Initiative, Liberia
- Dr. Ba Foday Suma**, ABC Development, Guinea
- 4:15 pm – 5:00 pm **Presentation of the report: “The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia”**
- Chair: **Mr. Alimamy Koroma**, Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone
- Speaker: **Mr. Augustine Toure**, International Peace Academy
- Discussant: **Dr. George Kieh**, Grand Valley State University, Michigan

Annex II

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