



**Concept Note: Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis
Prevention and Recovery in West Africa (Regional Seminar: 28-29 June 2010,
Accra – Ghana and working group meeting: December 2010)**

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I. Background Information

Context:

The role of parliaments is crucial in terms of rebuilding trust in government institutions, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and reconnecting citizens to the state. Similarly important is the role of parliament in better reflecting diversity and or to ensure fair representation of vulnerable groups. An overwhelming 40 percent of post-conflict countries do slide back into conflict—within just ten years. West Africa has been characterized by political violence and volatility in the past two years, and the electoral calendar for 2010-2011 might set the scene for renewed violence in several countries of the sub-region. In some countries, political instability and recent coups have also reduced the convening power that parliaments could play in bringing conflict to the political debate scene. Additionally, the impact of the financial, food and environmental crisis are raising new concerns to human security and democratic governance in the sub-region. The important and uncontrolled presence of small arms in the West Africa region continues to fuel insecurity and criminality and an additional obstacle to the achievement of community security in the sub-region. Threats such as drug trafficking, proliferation of small arms, political violence, citizen’s distrust in democratic institutions such as parliaments, call for a stronger role for parliamentary performance in crisis prevention and recovery in the sub-region.

Parliaments have a critical role to play in crisis prevention and recovery. Legitimately elected parliaments provide a forum for the concerns of diverse societal groups (including women and minority groups) to be aired and incorporated in processes of dialogue, reconstruction and conflict resolution (for example recommendations from Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, gender-based violence laws, and security sector reform). In crisis and conflict situations, parliaments’ central and potentially transformative role in dialogue and reconciliation processes creates an enabling environment for community security. In Sierra Leone, the Parliament drafted a plan of action to enhance its contribution to the national reconciliation and reform agenda. Part of the key recommendations of the action plan includes the development of a code of ethics for members of parliament and a code regarding the role, rights and duties of the opposition as well as the organization of constituency outreach visits to allow parliamentarians to promote the message of peace and reconciliation to ordinary Sierra Leoneans. Parliament’s contribution to conflict prevention and peace building is embodied in its everyday work of representing constituents, law-making, oversight of government action and the process of political contest. In Liberia, post-conflict strategies focused on strengthening the criminal justice system’s

response i.e to sexual and gender-based violence and will involve the drafting of new legislation and the review of different laws that affect women.

II. UNDP new initiative in West Africa

The challenges of drug trafficking, small arms proliferation, political violence and instability in West Africa call for an increased attention to parliaments as peace building and conflict prevention institutions. Therefore, UNDP, in close consultation with key actors and UNDP's partners in the West Africa region, is launching a dedicated initiative and strategy towards empowering parliaments as actors in violence and crisis prevention and post-conflict recovery through a series of activities in West Africa with the financial support of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aims of this initiative are to:

- 1) Strengthen regional parliamentary activities in West Africa through parliamentary fora and parliamentary working groups
- 2) Develop mechanisms and approaches to facilitate swift response to parliamentary assistance requests in Africa
- 3) Knowledge Sharing and dissemination of good practices

This new West Africa initiative will be closely linked to similar UNDP efforts focusing on developing initiatives that promote more effective action towards empowering parliaments as actors in conflict and violence prevention and post-conflict reconstruction in Central America and the Arab States region. In these two regions, a new dedicated programme has been launched as part of the UNDP Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening with the following objectives:

- Inform the role that national parliaments can play in supporting the prevention of conflict and of violence and the restoration of community security through research and case studies;
- Promote the involvement of national parliaments in conflict prevention and armed violence reduction with a view to influence policy changes;
- Build the capacity of regional organizations and of national parliaments on conflict prevention and armed violence reduction related issues;
- Foster parliamentary coordination on violence and conflict prevention and recovery with a first thematic window on armed violence and community security related issues at the international, regional and national levels (check AGORA at <http://www.agora-parl.org/node/1057>)

1. UNDP parliamentary development activities in West Africa

Parliamentary development is a robust area of **UNDP's work**. **UNDP** currently supports one in four parliaments globally¹. It does so primarily in recognition of parliamentary institutions' important role in democracy and development. In **West Africa**, UNDP currently supports the parliaments of Benin, Niger, Ghana, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Guinea and Togo. Activities are aimed at enhancing the representative, legislative or oversight capacity of parliamentary institutions in the governance process. In Liberia, UNDP is working with other international partners (UNMIL, USAID, WB, etc.) under a donor coordination framework to provide the much needed emergency capacity building support to address the above challenges, including developing a parliamentary strategic plan to define the parameters of the modernization process. In Guinea-Bissau, UNDP is supporting the National Assembly to play a key role in the implementation of the Security Sector Reform. In Mauritania, the parliament played an important role in developing post-crisis recommendations (including the development of a roadmap for crisis management). In Niger and Mauritania, UNDP has been supporting the parliamentary administration, and mainstreamed parliamentarians in democratic governance activities. Critical challenges in the sub-region relate to the infrastructure of national parliaments, capacity development, disconnection and distrust between citizens and elected representatives, constitutional dominance of the executive and / or presidency on the parliaments, and the lack of resources and weak capacity for the parliament to perform its key functions (absence of research centre, inadequate support for the committee work etc...). Among the chief vehicles for UNDP support to parliaments is the **Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS)**. The GPPS has been supporting the parliamentary development agenda over the past 11 years at the global, regional and national levels. In West Africa, UNDP democratic governance priorities focus on building an inclusive, responsive and capable state together with addressing sexual and gender-based violence through community-based programmes; preventing conflict and supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; and encouraging inclusion of disaster risk reduction policies and programmes in national plans.

2. Other relevant national and regional responses

A number of initiatives are being implemented in the region to address the above mentioned threats through the work and mandates of regional institutions (the ECOWAS Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the ECOWAS Parliament). Such initiatives include the West African Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) which played a crucial role in successfully advocating for the ratification in the

¹ As per the UNDP Annual Report 2007. Counting relatively small programmes, the number is closer to one in three.

region of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Early mechanism systems have been put in place to better respond to the challenges of post-conflict situations, and tensed political situation (ECOWAS early warning mechanism (ECOWARN), ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring Centre, work of WANEP and WACSOF (West Africa Civil society forum)². In the area of **security sector reform**, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) has been engaged on training MPs on international instruments, arms trade, and role of parliaments in negotiating, oversight, legislating on small arms control. UNREC and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) also started a series of parliamentary workshops discussing the roles of parliaments in small arms control, aiming at establishing a parliamentary network on the issue together with the ECOWAS. A series of organizations have also been actively engaged in strengthening the capacity of the ECOWAS parliament members to **prevent and manage conflicts** through training workshops of parliamentarians and dissemination of training manuals (i.e The Parliamentary Centre). **New regional frameworks** are also being defined to better address the **security sector challenges** (Regional Framework and Plan of Action for SSG / SSR by the ECOWAS Commission with support from the United Nations Office for West Africa that will also include a dedicated component on parliamentary oversight). The Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) will focus in 2010 on parliamentary ethics and defense budgeting (including capacity development activities in Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso) and adapt the IPU – DCAF handbook on parliamentary oversight of security sector. National parliaments are also supported by several partners in terms of capacity development activities to better address peacebuilding issues (i.e future AWEPA activities in Liberia, UNDP activities in Ghana, Nigeria etc...).

3. Key partnerships

Taking into consideration the involvement and activities of several partners in the region, and UNDP national programmes, UNDP would like to discuss the possibility of strengthening and complimenting existing initiatives led by other partners by supporting the creation of a Regional Steering committee to better coordinate partners activities in order to share information on programme activities, success stories and challenges on parliamentary development and crisis prevention and recovery issues in the region. This suggestion will be discussed at the June regional seminar.

4. Key partners identified

In line with existing activities, and mandate in the region, the following partners have been identified to participate in the June seminar, and discuss the idea of a regional Steering Committee and to share their

² See West Africa Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms at http://www.kaiptc.org/_upload/general/KAIPTC_11.pdf

experiences at the June Seminar in terms of supporting parliaments on CPR issues in the region i.e AWEPA - DCAF – FES – IPU – NDI - the Parliamentary Centre (Ghana) - UNREC – the ECOWAS Parliament – UNOWA - WANEP – WANSAs - WBI. Additional organizations could also be invited as observers in the process.

III. Proposed approach towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa

1. Regional Seminar (28-29 June 2010)

UNDP will host a regional seminar in Accra “Towards Strengthening the role of Parliaments in crisis prevention and recovery in West Africa” on June 28-29 2010 (A). To prepare for the regional seminar, UNDP will produce a series of research papers to identify good practices and lessons learned in the sub-region on parliamentary performance in crisis prevention and recovery:

- 1) Paper on existing regional Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) mechanisms in place (including parliamentary diplomacy) and how such systems impact parliamentary performance on CPR oversight and legislative work. The paper will identify usefulness, challenges and bottlenecks in the implementation of such mechanisms in terms of parliamentary performance. The paper will also review the work of the Africa Union and activities in West Africa.
- 2) Study of the issues generating violence, political violence and where political parties and parliaments stand vis-à-vis those structural and triggering factors (for example in 3 case study countries); identify change agents and possible ways of supporting them. Dedicated attention will be paid to electoral violence, and the issues of trust and confidence building between citizens and national parliaments.
- 3) Gender-based violence and parliamentary functions: how the parliamentary functions respond to the challenges of GBV in the region (existing laws, parliamentary hearings, interactions with women’s organizations)

The research papers will use, when applicable, the framework of the UNDP guidelines Parliaments, Crisis Prevention and Recovery (http://www.parlcpr.undp.org/docs/GPPS_Guidelines.pdf) and the draft self-assessment tool on the role of parliament in addressing crisis / conflict.

Objectives and Outcomes of the June regional seminar

- 1) To establish a forum for parliamentarians of the region to reflect on past capacity development activities in the field of crisis prevention, armed violence and community security: what has been successful and the impact of such activities.
- 2) To present, review and discuss the findings of the above mentioned research papers highlighting best practices and lessons learned in the region, and use the findings of the regional studies to initiate and develop a dialogue and open space for MPs' and parliamentary staff to identify critical challenges and priorities regarding violence prevention and peace building in the region.
- 3) To identify and debate how parliamentarians see their role in overcoming obstacles to effective parliamentary oversight and performance in CPR and SSR issues, including collection of concrete examples for sharing good practices and experiences
- 4) Present a draft self-assessment tool on parliamentary performance on CPR and SSR, ascertain its relevance and identify 3 potential country-case studies to be developed in the second semester
- 5) Development of a Joint Action Plan for partners to be put in place at the regional and national levels in the region. The Joint Action Plan will identify issues that parliamentarians want to address, existing mechanisms and bottlenecks to effective action on those issues, and identify what support is needed from UNDP and key partners in the region to empower parliamentarians to address priority issues.

Composition of the June seminar (participants)

40 Participants will be invited to the June seminar (UNDP will sponsor representatives of national parliaments of the region and ECOWAS representatives). **Invitations will target:** MPs and parliamentary staff from national parliaments of the sub-region, ECOWAS representatives, and regional partners in order to reflect linguistic and political diversity within the region (French / English / Portuguese – multiparty / bicameralism). 30 % of the participants should be women.

Methodology

The June regional seminar will provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to provide feedback on key activities implemented by partners in the region. The sessions will be dynamic, enabling active participation and feedback from participants. Draft research papers (A) will be presented to allow participants to discuss challenges lying ahead in terms of political and armed violence, crisis prevention

and recovery; usefulness of past activities; and how regional partners can further support the work of parliamentarians in the region. A draft self-assessment tool for parliamentary performance with regards to crisis prevention and recovery will also be presented to discuss its relevance and applicability in the region (B). The regional seminar will also provide time and space for the regional partners to meet and discuss on a possible Joint Action Plan to better respond to the needs of the parliamentarians in the region (C).

2. Meeting of the working group (December 2010)

As a follow-up to the June seminar, UNDP will facilitate national case studies to test the self-assessment tool on how to support parliament in addressing conflict (see below). The national case studies will be presented and discussed at a working group meeting in December 2010. This meeting should serve to build consensus but also to discuss the next phase (country-level) and prepare a preliminary work-plan to be carried out at the national level (pilot country projects in 2011), in collaboration with the ECOWAS Parliament and partners organizations

The **December working group** will have the following outcomes:

- 1) Review and discuss the national case studies,
- 2) On the basis of the discussions, identify general principles and activities to strengthen parliamentary performance in CPR in the region in the Joint Action Plan
- 3) Finalization of the publication and printing and dissemination **“Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa” compiling regional research and national case studies.**

Timetable

April 2010	Recruitment of lead consultant and researchers through grant agreements and consultancy contracts
15 June 2010	Submission of drafts regional papers
28-29 June 2010	June Conference
15 August 2010	Finalization of the papers

September – December 2010	Research – second round (3 national case studies piloting the self-assessment tool)
December 2010	Meeting of the working group and finalization of the publication <u>Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa</u>
2011	Activities in selected countries of the region to strengthen parliamentary performance in CPR in line with the Joint action plan

3. Research and the self- assessment tool

In 2009, UNDP developed a draft programmatic guide designed to provide practitioners and parliaments with programmatic guidance on supporting parliament in addressing conflict. Part of the guide comprises a **draft self-assessment tool** designed to identify how to support parliament in addressing crisis³. The draft questionnaire is designed as both a self-assessment tool for MPs and staff, as well as a programming instrument for UNDP country staff where a strong collaboration between the two groups is critical to establish a comprehensive assessment. The process of completing this questionnaire can be an integral step in the programme development process for UNDP practitioners but it is also critical in identifying parliament’s priority interests, and in helping to ensure ownership and sustainability. UNDP is now planning to pilot the draft guide and questionnaire with selected regional and national parliaments. The self-assessment tool will be used to identify bottlenecks, and how UNDP and partners can respond to the needs of parliamentarians to better address crisis prevention and recovery. The draft version of the self-assessment tool can be found in **Annex A**.

National Case studies: purpose, focus and expected outcomes

On the basis of the draft self-assessment tool, UNDP seeks to review and pilot it at the regional and national level to test its relevance for increasing parliamentary performance on crisis prevention and recovery. The self-assessment tool will help develop national case studies in the second semester of 2010 that will then be discussed in the December working group and in turn, identify recommended activities for 2011 implementation by UNDP and other partners in the region, as part of the joint action

³ The guide seeks to meet three objectives. First, to *inform* practitioners in the field of democratic governance on the role that parliament can play in addressing conflict, and why it has largely failed to do so. Second, to *guide* practitioners on how to approach programming in this emerging area of parliamentary development. Third, to *assist* practitioners in determining how to support parliament in addressing conflict. The guide has been developed on the basis of surveys completed by UNDP staff representing almost 20 countries³, a two-day workshop on parliaments and conflict prevention and recovery held in Paris in December 2009, and discussion and analysis by UNDP’s Democratic Governance Group (DGG) and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR).

plan. The draft-assessment tool will also be discussed in the regional working groups in the Arab region and Central America, as part of the broader UNDP project on parliaments and crisis prevention.

Timetable

April 2010	Distribution of the self-assessment tool to partners in the region for feedback
June 2010	Discussion on the relevance of the self-assessment tool and possible piloting at the national level and identification of three national case studies to apply the tool
September – December 2010	Research – second round (3 national case studies to pilot the self-assessment tool)
December 2010	Meeting of the working group and finalization of the publication <u>Towards Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Crisis Prevention and Recovery in West Africa</u>
2011	Piloting of recommended activities on the basis of the national case studies

Annex: QUESTIONNAIRE: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN ADDRESSING CRISIS / CONFLICT

Parliament and Crisis: Past Experience

Law-Making

	Response
Title of bills initiated to address conflict	
Title of bills amended to address conflict	
Title of bills passed to address conflict	
Please describe the purpose and nature of the legislation indicated above:	

Oversight

	Response
Number and topic of plenary debates held to address conflict / crisis	
Number and topic of committee debates held to consider resolutions and bills on conflict / crisis	
Number and topic of consultations held to	

address conflict / crisis	
Number and topic of hearings held to address conflict / crisis	
Number and topic of oversight investigations to address conflict / crisis	
Types of parliamentary committees established to address conflict / crisis ⁴	
Types of oversight bodies established to address conflict / crisis ⁵	
Number and type of oral and written questions posed on conflict / crisis	

<p>Please describe the results of the hearings/investigations indicated above:</p>
<p>Please describe the success/challenges met by the oversight bodies/committees indicated above:</p>

⁴ For example, committees on: public accounts, standing security/defense, ad hoc oversight, transitional justice, etc.

⁵ For example: anti-corruption commissions, truth-seeking or fact-finding commissions, war crime tribunals, commissions on reparations, etc.

<p>Please describe the executive's willingness to participate in oversight activities (hearings, releasing materials)</p>

Representativeness

	Response
How does parliament conduct constituency outreach to conflict / crisis -affected groups ⁶ ?	
How does parliament define conflict-affected groups ⁷ ?	
Types of conflict-related national strategies ⁸ parliament has participated in.	
Number and topic of plenary debates held to address conflict	
Number of trips per session that MPs visit constituencies	
Number and topic of committee debates held	

⁶ For example: constituency offices, constituency visits, mail, phone, other mechanisms

⁷ For example: women, children, minorities, etc.

⁸ For example: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), national security strategies, etc.

to address conflict	
Number and type of interventions from experts, CSOs and citizens to a committee	

Please describe the successes/challenges to outreach activities indicated above:

Please describe parliament's relationship to the executive in developing conflict-related national strategies

The Institution of Parliament

Types of parliamentary structures that address conflict?
<input type="radio"/> Standing committees. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Ad hoc committees. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Research unit. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Budget unit. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Media/communications office. Please specify:

<input type="radio"/> Other. Please specify:
How do parliament's internal rules of procedure alleviate/exacerbate the potential for conflict?
<input type="radio"/> Voting rules. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Committee meetings/hearing. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Role of the opposition. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Role of party caucuses. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Other. Please specify:
To what extent and how has parliament engaged civil society in conflict issues?
<input type="radio"/> Research/publications. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Expert testimony. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Hearings. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Investigations. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Media. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Other. Please specify:
To what extent and how have political party caucuses played a role in conflict issues?
<input type="radio"/> Promoting cross-party dialogue. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Sponsoring cross-party legislation. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Conducting cross-party hearings. Please specify:
<input type="radio"/> Other. Please specify:
How has parliament engaged other parliaments (regional or international) on conflict issues?
<input type="radio"/> Parliamentary fora. Please specify topic:
<input type="radio"/> Conferences. Please specify topic:
<input type="radio"/> Study tours. Please specify topic:
<input type="radio"/> Other. Please specify topic:

Parliament and Conflict: A Look Ahead

(To be completed by MPs and staff)

Please briefly describe the issues that may provoke conflict or armed violence that you want to address:

Please briefly describe the root causes of the issues that may provoke conflict or armed violence:

Please briefly describe why you believe parliament can successfully address the conflict or armed violence:

Please briefly describe whether you believe parliament (individual members, committees, caucuses) has the will to address the conflict or armed violence:

Please briefly describe what you believe parliament can do to address the conflict or armed violence:

Legislation:

Oversight:

Representation:

Other:

Please briefly describe the role that party caucuses can play, if any, in addressing the conflict or armed violence:

Please briefly describe the challenges to parliament in playing the aforementioned role:

Please briefly describe the role that you anticipate the executive will play in affecting parliament's capacity to address issues which may provoke conflict or armed violence:

Please briefly outline how the UNDP / partners can support parliament's efforts to address the conflict or armed violence:

Capacity development (members, staff, committees):

Structures/procedures:

Parliamentary caucuses:

Civil society:

Regional/international parliaments:

Other: