



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



15 March 2007 No. 1

Cross-Border Issues in West Africa

Expected Council Action

A Council meeting on cross-border issues in West Africa is currently scheduled for 16 March. The format, either closed consultations or a public debate, is still being discussed. The meeting is expected to focus on the long overdue report of the Secretary-General on cross-border issues in West Africa, which was only circulated to members on 13 March.

Key Recent Developments

The Council held an open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa on 9 August 2006 at the initiative of Ghana, then holding the Council presidency. There was a widely held view that the region still faces significant challenges. Slow economic recovery, institutional weakness and lack of expertise, corruption, the return of refugees, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) were all cited. Little reference was made to the possibility of UN inter-mission cooperation in the region.

The Council adopted a presidential statement after the debate stressing the importance of addressing peace consolidation in West Africa in a comprehensive manner. The statement further raised issues such as small arms trafficking, DDR, security sector reform, natural resources and UN cooperation with regional organisations. It also stressed the need for continuing cooperation among the UN, countries in the region and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The recent report of the Secretary-General builds on previous Secretary-General's recommendations, but says little on inter-mission cooperation. It suggests measures—mostly technical cooperation among UN entities in the region and regional stakeholders—on good governance, security sector reform, sanctions monitoring and implementation, transitional justice, humanitarian issues, cross-border illicit activities, youth unemployment, irregular migration, UN inter-institution cooperation and strengthening ECOWAS. Of direct implication to the Council would be the recommendations on sanctions, in particular the establishment of a panel on improving their monitoring, and UN missions facilitating the implementation of the results of transitional justice processes.

Despite acknowledging the need in 2006 for a comprehensive approach, in practice Council work on the region over the past seven months has continued with a country-specific character, with a particular focus on Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

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- On **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Council has focused on containing the instability and managing the peace process, particularly by endorsing in strong terms a larger role for the prime minister and ECOWAS. It has recently issued a press statement calling for the implementation of the recent Ouagadougou Agreement. Related key issues have included the holding of nationwide elections, which now seem improbable by October 2007. (One small token of regional approach has been the willingness of the Council to consider permission for units from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to assist the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).)
- On **Liberia**, Council attention has focused on making progress with the Secretary-General's benchmarks on security and peacebuilding in the post-transitional phase, progress on benchmarks is expected to inform the future exit strategy of UNMIL. Members have also focused on the future of the sanctions regime since the election of the new government, having in particular lifted the measures on timber but nonetheless kept those on diamonds.
- The Council referred the situation in **Sierra Leone** to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in June 2006. Throughout 2006 Council members—perhaps deferring to the nascent PBC—limited Council action on Sierra Leone to renewing the mandate of the residual UN political presence in the country (UNIOSIL), having already expressed the intention to consider an exit strategy for UNIOSIL in connection with the successful holding of the upcoming July 2007 elections. (However, in the January 2007 open debate on the PBC, the Council has signalled a disposition to become more involved in the PBC's work. There seems to be a willingness to increase cooperation and information-sharing, perhaps through the adjustment of UNIOSIL's mandate to formalise its assistance with the formulation of PBC country-specific strategies.)
- On **Guinea-Bissau**, Council attention seems to have acutely decreased since the end of Brazil's membership in December 2005. Action has been limited to discussing the periodic reports from the Secretary-General and renewing the mandate of the UN Peacebuilding Office (UNOGBIS).
- The Council did not take up the issue of recent violent disturbances in **Guinea**, but the matter is expected to be raised at the Secretary-General's lunch with Council members today.

Cross-border action and inter-mission cooperation have not been key aspects of recent Council decisions, beyond the reconfiguration of the mandate of UNOCI in resolution 1739, which largely kept existing cross-border cooperation provisions. Resolutions on Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have signalled willingness to consider further troop-sharing between UNMIL and UNOCI, but agreement has not been reached.

UNMIL, UNOCI, the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and other UN entities in the region have worked on improving coordination as well as support for governments and regional mechanisms on cross-border problems. Those initiatives include, *inter alia*, information-sharing, coordination on DDR and refugees, assistance to and strengthening of ECOWAS, meetings involving special representatives of the Secretary-General and force commanders under the auspices of UNOWA and cross-border exercises involving UNMIL, UNOCI and the governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea.

However, recent developments in the region seem to indicate that there are still considerable challenges of a cross-border nature to the stabilisation of the region.

The recent violent clashes in Guinea between the armed forces and opposition groups and the subsequent imposition of martial law on 12 February underlined the possible risks. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, met on 26 February with ECOWAS officials to discuss the latest developments in Guinea and ECOWAS' good offices mission to Conakry.

While the situation in Guinea seems to have improved after the appointment of a new prime minister in late February, there are still concerns with the potential for deterioration and adverse regional consequences, in particular the involvement of combatants from Liberia and key political players in Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire.

There are also separate reports of cross-border movements of combatants and arms among countries in the region, especially between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

However, apart from touching on the issue of small arms in a country-specific manner, Council discussion of the regional and global dimensions of the problem has not made progress in the past months. The draft resolution on small arms circulated by Argentina in March 2006 lapsed (which left future periodic Secretary-General's reports in abeyance). However, it is currently included as a footnote in the March programme of work and a Council statement requesting another Secretary-General's report on the issue seems possible before the end of the month.

Options

Options for Council members in the short and medium terms include:

- stimulating the environment for more of a regional perspective by mandating a regular reporting cycle for the Secretariat on progress with measures on cross-border issues and inter-mission cooperation;
- expressing support for the Secretary-General's cross-border recommendations;
- following up on the recommendations that require Council action, in particular the establishment of a panel on standards for sanctions monitoring and the facilitation of the implementation of results of transitional justice processes by UN missions;
- requesting the Working Group on Peacekeeping to review progress with the implementation of the authorisation in resolution 1609 for UN missions in the region to cooperate through joint air patrols, cross-border patrols, border crossing points, extended areas of responsibility and coordinated operations and come up with further recommendations;
- requesting the Secretary-General to assess the work of UNOWA and recommend possible adjustments to its mandate;
- expressing support for current activities on inter-mission and regional cooperation, especially the strengthening of ECOWAS and the Mano River Union (comprising Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) with the participation of Côte d'Ivoire; and
- mandating UNMIL to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo in Liberia, bearing in mind the regional perspective and requesting it and the sanctions committee to review this matter and report to the Council within ninety days.

Key Issues

The key issue that the Council has found difficult to focus on regards aspects of problems in West Africa. Harmonising and coordinating the several aspects of UN and regional involvement does not fit easily into the country-specific format the Council has become used to. Specific issues include:

- strengthening regional mechanisms such as ECOWAS and the Mano River Union;
- the proliferation of small arms and the effectiveness of Council arms embargoes;
- DDR, refugees and migration;
- curtailing cross-border illicit activities and the movement of combatants;
- making progress with security sector reform;
- developing integrated strategies for sensitive border zones; and
- when and how to take up new issues with regional dimensions, such as Guinea, without intruding prematurely into domestic political issues.

The traditional way in which situations are addressed in the Council—country-specific action on a regular basis rather than broader solutions—complicates the options for devising and implementing innovative regional measures, for example on inter-mission cooperation and the flow of small arms.

A key issue therefore is whether the Council will be willing to take the lead in overcoming those constraints. An incentive for the Council to support inter-mission cooperation and strengthening ECOWAS is the sheer cost of mounting stand-alone operations in several countries in a single region. In this regard, the recent growth in UN peacekeeping operations and the resulting scarcity in resources, human and financial, may make consolidation of regional approaches more attractive.

Council Dynamics

There is consensus within the Council on maintaining a focus on cross-border issues in West Africa particularly as countries in the region move into the post-conflict phase. The support also comes from members' sympathy for the concerns and the initiative of past and current African members in that regard.

For the past three months, members had been awaiting the Secretary-General's report. Most were keen on seeing the substance of the report well in advance of considering possible avenues for discussion. (As of this writing, members had only just received the advance copy of the Secretary-General's report after considerable confusion as to when it would be issued.) There seemed to be concern among some non-permanent members with the absence of sufficient time for analysing the report and addressing its recommendations at the debate.

Most members seem critical of UNOWA's effectiveness and have indicated in the past willingness to consider changes to its mandate and/or structure within the mandates review process. There seems to be an interest from some in having UNOWA take a more proactive role in the context of recent developments in Guinea. (However, given the recent defusing of tensions in that country, momentum in the Council for formally discussing the situation in Guinea seems to have decreased.)

Since the adoption of resolution 1609 in June 2005, substantive action on regional, cross-border issues has been limited to a presidential statement and scant mention in country-specific resolutions.

There seem to be divisions and some degree of scepticism on how best to approach regional solutions, especially regarding inter-mission cooperation. Within the Council and also among troop-contributing countries (TCCs), there seem to be concerns with the legal and managerial implications of that possibility. There is also concern with diverting the main focus of

peacekeeping operations in the region away from country-specific activities towards additional cross-border commitments.

Background on Council Action on Cross-Border Issues in West Africa

As a result of the nearly simultaneous outbreak of multiple civil wars in West Africa since the early 1990s, the Council has authorised a number of UN missions in the region. Members have also imposed a variety of sanctions regimes with regional implications, ranging from arms, diamonds, timber and oil embargoes to targeted measures such as travel bans and assets freezes in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Council missions to the region were also carried out in 2003 and 2004.

This region also witnessed some of the earliest instances of cooperation in peacekeeping between the UN and a regional organisation, ECOWAS.

A number of reports of the Secretary-General—in particular the 2004 and 2005 reports on subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa and the 2005 report on UN inter-mission cooperation—have taken stock of UN and regional initiatives on cross-border issues.

In pursuing that enhanced regional focus the mandate of UNOWA—first established in 2001—was adjusted in January 2005 to include:

- promoting an integrated subregional approach and facilitating coordination and information exchange between UN entities and other partners in the subregion;
- liaising with and assisting ECOWAS and the Mano River Union;
- good offices on behalf of the Secretary-General, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts; and
- following up on the cross-border activities as signalled in the reports of the Secretary-General and decisions of the Security Council.

Recommendations emanating from the Secretary-General's reports have included international, regional and country-specific measures. While most touched upon key action from countries with cooperation from UN entities and regional partners, some of them required Council action, particularly regarding cross-border activity by UN operations and specific measures on small arms.

The Council has expressed support for most of the Secretary-General's initiatives, as well as for UN assistance to governments on DDR, security sector reform, refugees and small arms. The Council has also included a regional dimension in some of its decisions, in particular:

- by authorising in resolution 1609 (i) certain measures on inter-mission cooperation as recommended by the Secretary-General, specifically joint air patrols, cross-border patrols, border crossing points, extended areas of responsibility and coordinated operations, subject to the agreement from TCCs; and (ii) troop-sharing between UNMIL and UNOCI;
- by including in UNOCI's mandate also in resolution 1609 and more recently in resolution 1739 (i) assistance with border monitoring, in particular regarding the movement of Liberian refugees and combatants; (ii) coordination with UNMIL and key partners on the repatriation of foreign ex-combatants; (iii) monitoring of the implementation of the arms embargo and the collection of arms brought into Côte d'Ivoire in violation of the sanctions regime; and

- by authorising UNMIL to provide security for the Special Court for Sierra Leone after the departure of UNAMSIL in resolution 1626 and to apprehend and transfer Charles Taylor to the custody of the Court in resolution 1638.

Other Secretary-General's recommendations, however, were not acted on, including the creation of a "naming and shaming" list of individuals, groups, corporations and countries involved in violating arms embargoes in West Africa and the referral of individuals to the International Criminal Court.

Still other recommendations on peacekeeping were not met with enthusiasm in the Council or among the wider membership, in particular cross-border military operations in the shape of hot pursuit and the establishment of a subregional reserve force.

Furthermore, the measures on inter-mission cooperation authorised in resolution 1609 do not seem to have made much progress. This appears to have been largely due to difficulties with logistics, management and, in particular, obtaining consent from the host countries and TCCs for cross-border operations.

UN Documents

Selected Security Council Resolutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/RES/1657 (6 February 2006) authorised UNMIL-UNOCI troop-sharing. • S/RES/1638 (11 November 2005) mandated UNMIL to apprehend Charles Taylor. • S/RES/1631 (17 October 2005) addressed cooperation between the UN and regional organisations. • S/RES/1626 (19 September 2005) authorised a temporary redeployment in Sierra Leone of UNMIL troops. • S/RES/1625 (14 September 2005) was a declaration on the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. • S/RES/1609 (24 June 2005) authorised certain measures in inter-mission cooperation and future UNMIL-UNAMSIL-UNOCI troop-sharing. • S/RES/1467 (18 March 2003) and 1209 (19 November 1998) addressed the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa and in the whole continent respectively.
Selected Presidential Statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/PRST/2006/38 (9 August 2006) was the statement on peace consolidation in West Africa requesting, <i>inter alia</i>, a report with recommendations on the cooperation between the United Nations missions deployed in the region and on the cross-border issues in West Africa. • S/PRST/2005/9 (25 February 2005) and 2004/7 (25 March 2004) considered cross-border and subregional problems in West Africa. • S/PRST/2005/7 (17 February 2005) addressed the issue of small arms and light weapons.
Reports of Council Missions to West Africa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/2004/525 (2 July 2004) • S/2003/688 (7 July 2003)
Selected Secretary-General's Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/2007/143 (13 March 2007) was the recent report on cross-border issues in West Africa. • S/2006/109 (17 February 2006) was the latest report on small arms. • A/60/182 (1 August 2005), A/59/285 (20 August 2004) and S/1998/318 (13 April 1998) were reports on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. • S/2005/135 (2 March 2005) was the report on inter-mission cooperation in West Africa. • S/2005/86 (11 February 2005) and S/2004/200 (12 March 2004) were reports on ways to address subregional and cross-border issues in West Africa.
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S/PV.5509 (9 August 2006) was the Council debate on peace consolidation in West Africa.

- S/2006/610 (3 August 2006) was the concept paper circulated by Ghana for the debate on peace consolidation in West Africa.
- PBC/OC/1/2 (21 June 2006) referred Burundi and Sierra Leone to the PBC.
- S/2005/833 (30 December 2005) contained the latest annual report of the Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.
- S/2005/16 (14 December 2005) contained the mandate, functions and activities of UNOWA for the period expiring on 31 December 2007.
- S/2002/207 (1 March 2002) contained the terms of reference for the Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa.

Other Relevant Facts

Chair of the Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa

Ambassador Basile Ikouebe (Congo)

Representatives of the Secretary-General

West Africa: Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (Mauritania)

Côte d'Ivoire: Vacant

Guinea-Bissau: João Bernardo Honwana (Mozambique)

Liberia: Alan Doss (United Kingdom)

Sierra Leone: Victor da Silva Ângelo (Portugal)

UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA)

Size as of 31 December 2006: seven international civilians; nine local civilians

Duration: November 2001 to present

Mandate Expires: 31 December 2007

UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS)

Size as of 31 December 2006: nine international civilians; two military advisers; one police adviser; ten local civilians

Duration: March 1999 to present

Mandate Expires: 31 December 2007

UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)

Total authorised strength: 8,050 military and 1,138 police

Size as of 28 February 2007: 8,044 military and 992 police

Key troop contributors: Bangladesh, Jordan and Pakistan

Cost: 1 July 2006 - 30 June 2007: \$438.37 million

Duration: April 2004 to present

Mandate Expires: 30 June 2007

UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

Total authorised strength: up to 14,783 military and 1,240 police

Size as of 28 February 2007: 14,056 military and 1,201 police

Key troop contributors: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria and Ethiopia

Cost: 1 July 2006 - 30 June 2007: \$745.57 million

Duration: September 2003 to present

Mandate Expires: 31 March 2007

UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)

Size as of 31 December 2006: 71 international staff; 176 local staff; 11 military observers; 17 police

Duration: 1 January 2006 to present

Mandate Expires: 1 January 2008