

Information Note¹

- Event:** Regional Seminar for African parliaments
- Organizers:** National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) with the financial support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs
- Date and venue:** 22-23 February 2016, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- Participants:** Parliamentarians of: Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Togo.
- Invited States:* Senegal
- International Organizations:* 1540 Committee, United Nations Regional Centre of Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- Others:* Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 1540 Committee former expert

1. Background

- Resolution 1977 (2011) requests the 1540 Committee to continue to organize and participate in outreach events on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) at the international, regional, subregional, and, as appropriate, national level, and promote the refinement of these outreach efforts to focus on specific thematic and regional issues related to implementation.
- Parliaments have a key role to play in supporting the implementation of the resolution in its many provisions, both in adopting the required legislation and in ensuring appropriate oversight and the availability of the budget allocations needed to implement them.
- On 2 September 2015, the Committee held an informal meeting during which Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) addressed the Committee.

¹ For information - not an official report. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent those of the 1540 Committee or of the organizers or participants in the event.

2. Highlights and overview

This regional seminar was the first event ever of this nature bringing together Parliamentarians of one continent, to discuss exclusively about the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). 72 Parliamentarians from 19 African States participated in this seminar.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Guillaume Soro, President of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, recalled the special role of parliamentarians in adopting the legislation that codifies the obligations enshrined in resolution 1540 (2004) and in overseeing the enforcement of such legislation. He stressed the need of a preventive security strategy to address current challenges in particular those related to terrorism.

The Secretary General of the IPU, Mr. Martin Chungong, underlined the strong legislative component of resolution 1540 (2004), and the responsibility of parliamentarians to enhance the security of their citizens. He indicated that the IPU intended to follow up the regional seminar with more targeted action at the national level in order to lend assistance to parliaments that wish to promote implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

The Director of UNREC, Ms. Olatokunbo Ige referred to the role played by the Centre in supporting African States to develop their 1540 National Implementation Action Plans.

In his key note speech, Mr. Isidor Marcel Sene, 1540 Committee Member (Senegal) referred to the key function of legislators in developing and enacting the necessary legal framework to help prevent the potential consequences of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons proliferating to non-State actors, including terrorists.

Mr. Sene announced that the African Union Commission in cooperation with the 1540 Committee would host a 1540 Review and Assistance Conference for African Union (AU) Member States from 6 to 7 April 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He also briefed participants about the Comprehensive Review being carried out in accordance with resolution 1977 (2011) and shared some preliminary results of this review related to Africa.

During the working sessions, among others, a 1540 former expert and the Director of UNREC spoke about the current challenges related to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation in Africa. The 1540 expert made a presentation of the 1540 resolution, its requirements and obligations. UNODC explained the international counterterrorism framework and the work carried out by the office to support Member States.

During the course of the discussions, most Members of Parliament (MPs) manifested their deep concern derived from the terrorist activities carried out on African soil by groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, ISIS and Al-Shabaab.

Participants were divided into two working groups with the aim of developing concrete recommendations for follow-up actions.

The meeting generated a genuine interest in the objectives of resolution 1540 (2004). Participating parliamentarians showed their willingness to contribute to better implementation of resolution 1540, not only through the enactment of legislation but also through their responsibilities related to budget allocation and oversight.

3. Additional Comments

For further information, please contact the 1540 Committee experts by e-mail at 1540experts@un.org.