

**The Regional Crisis and Human Rights Abuses in West Africa:
A Briefing Paper to the U.N. Security Council
Human Rights Watch
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The United Nations Security Council's mission to the West African region comes at a critical juncture. There have been some significant positive developments in the region in the past year, namely progress in the restoration of peace and accountability in Sierra Leone. At the same time, the West African sub-region has experienced two serious setbacks: the outbreak of conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and the resurgence of the Liberian war.

These latter two developments present serious threats to the stability of all bordering states. The past eight months of armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, and in particular, the patterns of human rights abuses in the western part of the country, are a renewed reminder of the need to address the underlying causes of an ever-shifting regional crisis. The resurgence of the Liberian war, with even Monrovia under threat from rebel advances in the past few weeks, is fundamental to the problems in the region, but is only one element in what has clearly evolved into a regional crisis, with the responsibility for abuses shared by numerous regional actors.

We welcome that the terms of reference for the trip include the links between the conflict in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone. Focusing solely on the government of Liberia, without considering the responsibility of all regional players, would fail to address the causes of the crisis, which stems in part from the impunity of too many regional actors. For this reason we have included Guinea in this overview of concerns, despite its omission from the terms of reference, due to its integral role in the region's security and humanitarian crises.

While the Special Court for Sierra Leone represents an important attempt to end the cycle of violence and impunity by holding accountable those who bear the greatest responsibility for gross abuses of human rights, more efforts are needed to investigate and document the ways in which human rights abuses continue to fuel conflicts throughout the region, and to hold perpetrators accountable. In particular, the United Nations has a critical role to play in: consistently condemning all perpetrators of human rights abuses, whether they are state or non-state actors; limiting the ability of state and non-state actors to carry out abuses by cutting off supplies of weapons and financing; and creating effective mechanisms to increase the accountability of regional and local authorities to their populations.

The flow of arms and combatants, including mercenaries, across porous borders paired with the willingness of regional governments to support insurgent groups against neighbors is a dangerous combination. Developments in the past year in Côte d'Ivoire highlight the serious potential for a constant regional cycle of conflict and destabilization as armed groups produce new cycles of human rights abuses, internally displaced persons and refugees, and child soldiers.

Human Rights Watch has monitored West Africa for over a decade, through regular missions as well as a field presence for over three years in Sierra Leone. Earlier this year we conducted ten weeks of field investigation in Côte d'Ivoire and neighboring countries. With the terms of reference for your trip in mind, we would like to offer the following analysis and recommendations.

Liberia: Upsurge in Fighting and Humanitarian Crisis

The recent peace talks in Ghana produced a ceasefire accord on June 17 signed by the government of Liberia and the two rebel groups. Over the past six months, Liberia has returned to full-scale armed conflict. Many of the members of the Liberian rebel groups were part of other warring factions in Liberia's brutal war of 1989 -1996. With the support of neighboring governments, they have now re-grouped and re-armed, and have initiated a new phase of war in Liberia. The main rebel group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), operates from bases in northern Liberia's Lofa county and from Guinea, where it has that government's support. A second rebel group called the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which has recently split from the LURD and is reportedly receiving support from the Ivorian government, has also made territorial gains and currently occupies most of southeast Liberia. With the exception of Monrovia and parts of Nimba County, which remain under government control, the majority of Liberian territory is reported to be in the hands of the two rebel movements. Following the Sierra Leone Special Court's June 4 announcement of the indictment and arrest warrant against President Charles Taylor, the rebel groups approached within a few kilometers of Monrovia, prompting mass displacement of civilians in and around the town.

Both the government of Liberia and Liberian rebel forces are responsible for violations of international humanitarian law amounting to war crimes and other serious human rights abuses. President Taylor himself has now been indicted for his role in supporting abuses against civilians during the war in Sierra Leone. In Liberia, tens of thousands of people have been forcibly displaced and hundreds if not thousands of civilians have been killed, either deliberately or in crossfire. Recent human rights abuses committed by both sides include the forced recruitment of children in displaced and refugee camps, forced labor, assault, and sexual violence against civilians, as well as attacks on humanitarian workers. The inflow of arms in breach of the U.N. embargo (see below) contributes to such abuses. The Liberian government has continued its intolerance of dissent, and civil society actors – especially human rights activists and independent journalists – continue to face harassment, intimidation, and imprisonment. The LURD rebel group continues to abduct and forcibly recruit civilians, as was recently documented during their April attack on the Jahtondo area. The MODEL group has also been responsible for abuses against civilians, particularly in western Côte d'Ivoire, where Human Rights Watch documented incidents of forced labor, rape, and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Fighting between the Liberian government and rebel groups spread to all three neighboring borders in 2003. As of March 2003, incidents at Bo Waterside, on the Sierra Leonean border, Ganta near the Guinean border, and Toe town and Zwedru, near the Ivorian border, reflected the increasing regional involvement in the Liberian war, with attacks taking place both along and across borders. Due to the fighting and the lack of security guarantees for aid workers, most of the country is currently inaccessible to humanitarian agencies. Thousands of displaced Liberians, Ivorian refugees, and ECOWAS nationals who fled the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire are currently beyond reach of urgently needed international humanitarian assistance and protection. Many of these civilians are in territory under the control of the Liberian rebel groups. Following the combat on the outskirts of Monrovia in early June, thousands of civilians fled displaced persons camps and are currently sheltering in the capital in appalling conditions. Reports of newly recruited and armed children continue to emerge from both Monrovia and rebel-held areas.

The Security Council must address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Liberia by calling on all the warring parties to 1) cease abuses against civilians, including summary executions, abductions, rape, theft of food and other items essential to their survival, 2) end recruitment of children and demobilize existing child soldiers, and 3) ensure that international humanitarian agencies are guaranteed secure access throughout Liberia to civilians in need of assistance and protection, including through cross-line and cross-border operations from neighboring countries. Protection of civilians must be a priority, and if the ceasefire agreement holds then any intervention force deployed in Liberia must be provided with Chapter VII peace-enforcement authorization to best ensure the protection of civilians.

In addition, the Security Council should take further steps to end illicit arms flows to the Liberian government and to end the support of abusive insurgent Liberian groups by neighboring countries. The U.N. Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), which has not adequately raised human rights concerns, should be expanded and given the resources and clear mandate to conduct human rights monitoring, investigation and reporting, activities that have long been and will continue to be urgently required in Liberia.

Human Rights Watch urges Members of the United Nations Security Council to:

- Call on all parties in the Liberian conflict to respect civilians and refrain from violence against civilians, recruitment of child soldiers, and looting of civilian property. In addition, call on LURD to immediately release all abducted civilians and on both LURD and MODEL to permit civilians to freely depart areas of conflict for their safety.
- Call on all parties in the Liberian conflict and neighboring governments to respect humanitarian aid workers and provide unfettered access to civilian populations in need of assistance and protection in Liberia, including through cross-line and cross-border operations from neighboring countries.
- Provide any future intervention force in Liberia with Chapter VII peace enforcement authorization to protect civilians.
- Revise and strengthen the mandate of the U.N. Peace-Building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) to include human rights monitoring and investigation, public reporting, and the raising of individual cases of abuse with the Liberian authorities and the leadership of the rebel groups. Funding for these activities should come from the general funds of the U.N. rather than from donor contributions.
- Express your condemnation of regional governments for their support to abusive insurgent groups and violations of existing sanctions on Liberia, and consider imposing secondary sanctions on regional governments found to be involved in the Liberian war.

Côte d'Ivoire: On the Precipice

The eight-month-old war in the Côte d'Ivoire has revealed deep divisions in Ivorian society and produced numerous serious abuses against civilians, some of which amount to war crimes. Western Côte d'Ivoire has been the site of a virtual proxy war by Liberian forces, demonstrating the easy spillover potential of the Liberian conflict. As was the pattern by all sides in Liberia, armed groups

have targeted civilians for abuse, and looting has been a primary objective. Human Rights Watch has documented widespread abuses by both government and rebel-allied fighters in the west. Executions, sexual violence, forced labor and systematic looting of property have been commonplace, abuses that echo the treatment of civilians in Liberia.

The recent ceasefire in the west, and the formation of the government of reconciliation, are steps in the right direction, but the Ivorian peace process remains extremely fragile. There is an urgent need for the parties to the conflict, the United Nations and member states to reinforce these positive steps with further concrete action, both within Côte d'Ivoire and in neighboring Liberia. Parts of the country, particularly along the Liberian border, remain volatile, demonstrating the degree to which the Liberian and Ivorian conflicts are interlinked. Impunity—both past and present, Ivorian and regional—remains a key concern that must be addressed if a stable Côte d'Ivoire is to emerge from the past months of conflict. Efforts must be made to bridge the social divisions created by years of manipulation of ethnic and political tensions.

Abuses committed by the government and government-allied forces include: reprisal killings by state security forces based on the ethnic, national, religious or political affiliations of individuals; indiscriminate attacks on civilians by helicopter gunships; killings, rapes, and other acts of violence against civilians committed by Liberians recruited by the Ivorian government in refugee camps and from the Liberian MODEL rebel group; and attacks on northern Ivorians and immigrant civilians by civilian militias encouraged by and sometimes working in complicity with government in and around Duékoué, Daloa, Toulepleu and Tabou.

Abuses by the “Forces Nouvelles”¹ rebel groups and allied Liberian fighters include: summary executions of dozens of government officials, suspected government sympathizers and members of civilian militias by Ivorian rebel troops; systematic looting, summary executions and other acts of violence against civilians by Liberian fighters allied to the MPIGO rebel group; and sexual violence against girls and women in the west, including rape and sexual slavery.

Refugees and immigrants have been particular targets in the Ivorian war. Liberian refugees, including children, have been subjected to forced recruitment and violence by state authorities and local communities in western Côte d'Ivoire. Immigrants, particularly Burkinabé, continue to suffer from widespread attacks that have in many instances been encouraged or tolerated by authorities. Efforts to relocate the refugee population and ensure protection for the immigrant population must be implemented without further delay.

It is vital that the cycle of impunity in Côte d'Ivoire, which is one of the causes of the recent conflict, is ended. There is an urgent need to ensure that abuses by all sides in the Ivorian conflict are fully investigated and that those responsible for abuses are brought to justice. The human rights monitoring component of the recently approved UN mission to Côte d'Ivoire, MINUCI, must be implemented immediately, with an extensive field presence, in order to deter further abuses, document past incidents, and contribute to the protection of civilians. In addition, outstanding issues that have contributed to the conflict, such as land and nationality disputes, must be addressed

¹ The rebel groups include the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, MPC), the Movement for Justice and Peace (Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix, MJP) and the Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West (Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest, MPIGO).

promptly. Adequate support from the United Nations and its member states will be required to assure a comprehensive and effective response to these complex issues.

- Call on the government of Côte d'Ivoire to immediately cease recruitment of Liberian refugees; end support to civilian militias; and take immediate steps to ensure that attacks on Ivorian citizens and foreign nationals, particularly Burkinabé and Liberian refugees, are ended, particularly in Duékoué, Guiglo and around Daloa and Tabou.
- Support the immediate implementation of the human rights monitoring component of MINUCI in Cote d'Ivoire, with appropriate human, financial and technical resources. The monitoring component should have the mandate to report on violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by all sides to the conflict, including Liberian combatants, and should make recommendations about mechanisms for holding perpetrators accountable. The monitoring mission should have as extensive a field presence as possible, including in Daloa, Bouaké, San Pedro, Duékoué and Man. The mission's reports should be made public.

Guinea

Responding to the regional crisis is incomplete without addressing Guinea's role as both the principal regional recipient of large numbers of refugees and a key supporter of the LURD. The government of Guinea fears attacks at its Liberian border, but continues to support the presence of LURD troops in the Liberian refugee camps, a presence that is now well-documented. Guinea has been complicit in abuses of Liberian refugees through its support to the LURD. This has been documented by Human Rights Watch and other organizations, including in the latest report of the U.N. Panel of Experts.² While Guinea is clearly in a fragile position—facing elections later this year, with an unstable economy, and with over 100,000 Sierra Leonean, Ivorian and Liberian refugees remaining on its territory—the government has an obligation to respect international human rights and humanitarian norms, and to respect the U.N. arms embargo on Liberia. Guinea, a Security Council member, should be warned to cease its support to LURD or face the possibility of sanctions.

It is essential that refugees are able to seek refuge in Guinea and that refugee camps retain a truly humanitarian character. A serious effort must be made to screen refugees at border transit posts using fair and efficient procedures. This requires that humanitarian agencies—especially UNHCR—are provided access to all border transit areas with incoming refugees and other displaced civilians, or alternatively, that refugees are swiftly transferred to secure locations where such screening can be conducted. In addition, UNHCR must be supported in its efforts to increase the levels of humanitarian assistance and protection of refugees, not only from sexual exploitation, but also from forced recruitment into armed groups, which are having a destabilizing effect through the region.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has made significant progress over the past year. The decade-long civil war ended, and the state of emergency has been lifted. Last May, President Kabbah and his Sierra Leone People's Party were re-elected in elections that were largely peaceful, though there were a few reports of violence and intimidation. The seventeen thousand-strong peacekeeping force of the United Nations

² S/2003/498.

Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) completed disarmament of over forty-seven thousand combatants, contributing, with British-led efforts to significant improvement in prospects for peace and security. More than 220,000 Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea, Liberia, and the broader sub-region have returned home. Two important transitional justice mechanisms aimed at ensuring accountability for the horrific abuses that characterized the war—the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—have begun operations.

Against these positive developments, the intensification of civil war in neighboring Liberia brought over 60,000 Liberian refugees to Sierra Leone, resulted in instability in the border areas, and drew in hundreds of Sierra Leonean former combatants to fight for both Liberian government and rebel forces. A similar pattern emerged in Cote d’Ivoire, where former combatants from Sierra Leone’s war have been actively involved in fighting. The regional instability, continuing attacks along the border, and the fragility of the peace in Sierra Leone, should be taken into account in any assessment of the potential for further drawdown of the UNAMSIL forces.

The Sierra Leone Special Court

In March, the Sierra Leone Special Court's announcement of its first seven indictments was a tremendous step forward for the cause of justice in Sierra Leone. The Court announced indictments against Foday Saybana Sankoh, Johnny Paul Koroma, Sam Bockarie, Issa Hassan Sesay, Alex Tamba Brima, Morris Kallon and Sam Hinga Norman, and, in April, added an indictment against Augustine Gbao. The crimes alleged in the indictments include murder, rape, extermination, acts of terror, enslavement, looting and burning, sexual slavery, conscription of children into an armed force, and attacks on UNAMSIL peacekeepers and humanitarian assistance workers.

On June 4, the Special Court unsealed its March 2003 indictment against Liberian President Charles Taylor, who stands accused as one of those “bearing the greatest responsibility” for war crimes (murder, taking hostages); crimes against humanity (extermination, rape, murder, sexual slavery); and other serious violations of international humanitarian law (use of child soldiers) in Sierra Leone. Sankoh, Sesay, Brima, Kallon, Norman and Gbao are in custody. Two indicted individuals and members of their families who might have been witnesses to the role of Charles Taylor have been killed in Liberia in the past six weeks. Bockarie and members of his family were reportedly killed by Liberian security forces in early May and Koroma was reportedly killed earlier this week in Liberia under circumstances that remain unclear.

The Council has already called on “all States, in particular the Government of Liberia, to cooperate fully with the Special Court for Sierra Leone.”³ The Council should reiterate the demand that all states cooperate in the immediate arrest and transfer of all indicted individuals to the custody of the Special Court.

- Call on all states you visit as well as others in the region—including Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo—to commit to the safe return of all individuals indicted by the Special Court of Sierra Leone who flee into their territories, to assist in their apprehension, and to otherwise cooperate with the Special Court.

Protection of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and ECOWAS Nationals

³ S/RES/1478 (2003).

Thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons currently face bleak options in the West African sub-region. Many are faced with the unacceptable choice of remaining in conflict zones where they risk an array of atrocities by abusive armed forces, or seeking refuge in camps where again, they may be subjected to forced recruitment and abuses by governments and abusive insurgencies alike. For some individuals, it devolves into a choice between conflict zones, as it has for many of the Ivorian, Liberian and ECOWAS nationals who fled into Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in the past five months.

Prior to the February upsurge in fighting between the government and rebel forces in Liberia, thousands of civilians were receiving temporary assistance in refugee camps, transit centers and among host communities in Liberia's Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Nimba counties, all of which border Côte d'Ivoire. This group included at least 3,000 Ivorian refugees and more than 5,000 Burkinabé and other ECOWAS nationals, many of whom had fled Côte d'Ivoire for Liberia in December 2002, and some of whom urgently required protection in Liberia.

Due to the upsurge in fighting in and around Zwedru and Toe town at the end of February, most of these people were dispersed into the bush in eastern Liberia. Some have returned to a hostile environment in Côte d'Ivoire. To date, many are unaccounted for due to the lack of humanitarian access. This development raises several concerns regarding the assistance and protection provided to civilians in the region. For one, Guinea's refusal to allow entry to many of the ECOWAS nationals clearly contributed to their remaining in unsafe conditions in Liberia. In December 2002, some Burkinabé individuals were refouled by Guinean authorities after they attempted to enter Guinea amidst a convoy of Malians. The failure to either put sufficient pressure on Guinea to admit refugees or to ensure their protection in Liberia, despite clear signs of increasing conflict by January 2003, speaks of a weak humanitarian framework in Liberia.

The humanitarian situation of ECOWAS nationals from the region, in particular large numbers of Burkinabé who were residing and working in Côte d'Ivoire prior to the war, provides an additional example of the failure of the current system to adequately protect and assist civilians in need in the region. Thousands of Burkinabé were forced to flee their homes in western Côte d'Ivoire in December 2002. Most lost all their possessions due to looting and their urgent flight from their homes. Many who fled west became trapped in Liberia. Others managed to reach Guinea, only to find that because they were not deemed to be refugees, they could not benefit from the assistance and the protection of the UNHCR.

Liberia presents a situation where effective protection and assistance to refugees is inextricably linked to the provision of effective protection and assistance to internally displaced persons. Given the constant insecurity threatening these populations, today's internally displaced person is tomorrow's refugee, and vice-versa. Ending these cycles of displacement and refoulement should be a priority of the Security Council. The only way it can be sufficiently addressed is to address the overall causes and patterns of regional instability and human rights abuses and to ensure that once displaced, adequate humanitarian assistance and protection are in place to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable civilians by abusive governments and insurgent groups.

In the course of your visit to the region, the Security Council should consider additional ways of strengthening the humanitarian framework in Liberia, but also in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. Deployment of human rights monitors and international observers at key border points would help deter abuses.

- Call on all your interlocutors to respect international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly regarding treatment of civilians and other non-combatants, and recruitment of child soldiers, and to hold accountable those members of their forces responsible for abuses.
- Ensure that adequate protection and assistance reaches all internally displaced persons and refugees in the region, including ECOWAS nationals present in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, including via cross-border operations from neighboring countries, if necessary.
- Explore the possibility of the placement of international military observers and human rights monitors along the Sierra Leonean/Guinean, Guinean/Liberian, and Ivorian/Liberian borders to monitor and investigate cross-border attacks.

Child Soldiers

Over the past year there has been continuing recruitment of children by government and rebel groups in Liberian displaced and refugee camps, and fresh reports of recruitment of child soldiers by both rebel and government forces in Côte d'Ivoire. A particularly worrying development has been the recruitment of Liberian refugees, including children, by government-allied groups in Niela refugee camp in western Côte d'Ivoire and in Liberian refugee camps in Ghana.

Human Rights Watch gathered accounts of children among the Liberian fighters in Côte d'Ivoire, some of whom are as young as nine and according to one description, "cannot even control the weight of their guns." The continuing use of child recruits is also noted in recent reports from Liberia.

Security Council Resolution 1460 committed the United Nations to enter into dialogue with parties to armed conflict that are recruiting or using child soldiers in order to develop "clear and time bound action plans to end the practice."⁴ In that resolution, the Security Council also called on parties to armed conflict identified in an annex to the Secretary General's report of November 26, 2002, "to provide information on steps they have taken to end the recruitment or use of child soldiers." Parties to armed conflict in five countries were named in this annex for violating their international obligations regarding the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Among them were the government of Liberia and the LURD.

Human Rights Watch therefore urges the Security Council to use the upcoming trip to West Africa to take steps to engage the governments of Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire on the above practices, in accordance with Resolution 1460, and call on all Liberian and Ivorian insurgent groups to refrain from recruiting children and immediately demobilize existing child soldiers. The Security Council should remind the government of Liberia and the LURD of their obligations under Resolution 1460 to report on the steps that they have taken to halt their recruitment or use of child soldiers in violation of international obligations, and the Security Council's intention to consider appropriate further steps if it deems that insufficient progress is made in this regard, after evaluating the Secretary General's next report on this issue, which is due by October 31, 2003.

⁴ S/RES/1460 (2003).

As part of the Secretary General's next report on children and armed conflict, the Security Council has requested a progress report regarding parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of their international obligations, in accordance with Resolution 1379. In view of this request, the Security Council should also consider ways to enhance reporting and monitoring of this issue in the region.

Use of Proxy Forces and Support to Militias

One of the alarming developments in the region, reflected in particular by the evolution of the conflict in western Côte d'Ivoire, has been the recruitment and use of foreign fighters and civilian militias by both rebel and government forces. In addition to the government's use of mercenaries from other African countries, both the government and rebel forces used hundreds of Liberian fighters and members of civilian militias in their efforts to control the west. Some of these fighters were implicated in serious human rights abuses in previous wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, including former RUF fighters such as recently deceased Sam Bockarie, who was indicted by the Sierra Leone Special Court for war crimes.

Human Rights Watch interviewed civilians who fled Danane, Zouan-Hounien, Toulepleu, Blolékin and other towns and villages controlled by government and rebel groups in Côte d'Ivoire in the past few months. Victims interviewed by Human Rights Watch consistently stated that English-speaking Liberians were responsible for systematic looting of civilian property, accompanied by assault and, in some cases, executions of civilians and the rape of women and girls. In addition, Human Rights Watch received reports that while Liberian fighters were clearly linked to Ivorian rebel and government forces, and in some cases were recruited on the understanding that they would be paid, they rarely received any formal salary. Instead, whether through inadequate capacity or willingness to control these fighters, they appear to have been accorded a virtual license to enrich themselves through looting of civilian property.

Finally, the continuing use of civilian militias sponsored by regional governments, represents an alarming trend that must be addressed. The forced and voluntary recruitment of civilians into ill-trained, armed militias by the Liberian government and rebel groups is an ongoing concern in that it contributes to the proliferation of abuses by armed forces in the region. The extension of this trend to Côte d'Ivoire, where the activities of rural civilian self-defense committees have resulted in serious abuses of human rights, is highly alarming.

- Extend and broaden the mandate of the U.N. Panel of Experts to investigate regional financing and support to abusive armed groups, and consider extending the sanctions regime against those governments who participate in this practice.

Circulation of Arms

The inflow and circulation of arms, particularly small arms and light weapons, in the region has clearly contributed to the increased conflict and abuses against civilians by governments and armed groups. It also has facilitated the formation of new armed groups and the use of ill-disciplined fighters, including mercenaries.

The recent report of the U.N. Panel of Experts on Liberia documented continuing violations of the arms embargo on Liberia and noted that the support of regional governments such as Guinea to Liberian insurgent groups constitutes a violation of the sanctions regime. The Liberian government recently acknowledged importing huge quantities of small arms and light weapons, and the list of imported weapons it provided the Panel closely match those documented to have been illegally delivered from Serbia and Montenegro in six shipments in 2002; the Liberian government did not admit to earlier illicit arms purchases, which have also been documented. The Panel also described numerous suspected actual or attempted arms shipments to Liberia in recent months, including a possible ongoing scheme to export weapons to Liberia on the basis of a Democratic Republic of Congo end-user certificate, and the import of illegal weapons shipments to Liberia via Burkina Faso.

In addition, abusive insurgents throughout West Africa have been able to obtain arms and other military support with apparent ease. The Panel describes Guinea as a supply route for arms to the LURD, as noted, and points out that it has some evidence Cote d'Ivoire is supporting MODEL. The use of unaccountable mercenaries and untrained civilian militias, including in Cote d'Ivoire, is troubling, particularly as many of those recruited, including ex-RUF, are known to have an atrocious human rights record.

Human Rights urges the members of the Security Council to consistently condemn all regional governments that violate the sanctions regime on Liberia or support abusive forces. Accordingly, the Security Council should extend and broaden the mandate of the U.N. Panel of Experts to investigate regional financing and support to abusive armed groups, and consider imposing secondary sanctions against those governments who participate in this practice. The Security Council also should press for accountability for embargo violations, including by calling on U.N. member states to enact national laws that implement U.N. arms embargoes and by promoting and monitoring national efforts to investigate and prosecute sanctions-violators.

In addition, strengthening of the EWOWAS small arms moratorium is needed. Specifically, it should be expanded to encompass all weapons categories, developed into an information-exchange mechanism, and made binding. Further efforts are needed to ensure that arms exporters comply with the moratorium, which could be facilitated through full participation in the proposed information exchange.

- Promote measures to address the uncontrolled spread of weapons in the sub-region and continued embargo violations, such as through the strengthening of the ECOWAS small arms moratorium, and the prosecution of sanctions violators.