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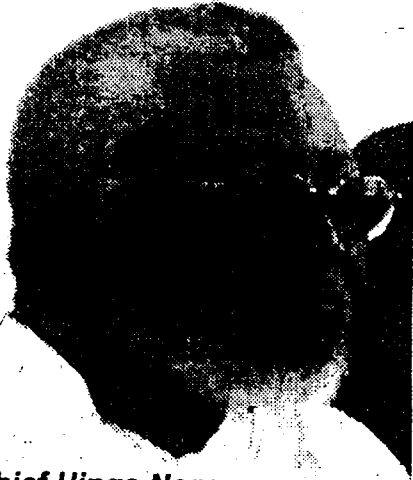
Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Friday, April 16, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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at Special Court...

Prosecution responds to Chief Norman's motion



Chief Hinga Norman

Motion challenging whether the recruitment of child soldiers amounted to a crime under international customary law at the time of the indictment which he faces and that any past contribution by her be struck from the consideration of the remaining Appeals Chamber Judges. Earlier, Chief Norman's Defence had stated that as UNICEF

Contd. Page 2

By Tamba Borbor

The Prosecution Team of the Special Court has responded to a motion filed by Chief Hinga Norman on 25th March 2003. In Chief Norman's motion which was filed on his behalf, it submitted that the current President of the Appeals Chamber Judge Renate Winter ought to withdraw from any further deliberations in the Preliminary

From Front Page

had applied to the Appeals Chamber to submit an 'amicus curiae' brief; an application which was indeed granted and then filed by UNICEF on the 21st of January 2004, they became aware of an apparent close connection between Judge Winter and UNICEF. Notably, the Defence observed her involvement in a report jointly published in September 2002 by UNICEF and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) entitled: International Criminal Justice and Children. "In the said report, Judge Renate Winter is thanked in the acknowledgement as an 'expert who generously reviewed the draft and

supported the drafting process'," the Defence noted. Further research done by the Defence revealed additional contact between UNICEF and Judge Winter especially in a UNICEF report entitled: 'Working for and with Adolescents' dating back to February 2002 in which UNICEF asserted at page 56 that they "benefited immensely from the technical assistance provided by Austrian Judge Renate Winter and would like to recommend her to other country offices." Furthermore, Judge Winter is listed with a number of senior UNICEF personnel as part of an expert panel for a Masters Degree in Children's Rights run by the University

of Freiburg. In its response, the Prosecution submits that it is for the party seeking the disqualification of a Judge to adduce sufficient evidence to satisfy the Chamber that the Judge is not impartial or that there is a reasonable apprehension of bias. It also submits that Judges have a duty to sit in any case in which they are not obliged to recuse themselves...on the basis of unfounded and unsupported allegations of apparent bias. Regarding the submission by the Defence that Judge Winter "approved the draft" of the UNICEF publication, the Prosecution states that the September 2002 publication by UNICEF indicates that Judge Winter

was one of over 50 people who "reviewed the draft" and who supported the drafting process; adding that it is common for the authors of publications to submit drafts to experts for their comments or suggestions, and to acknowledge the assistance of those experts in the final publication. On the issue of close connection or relationship between Judge Winter and

UNICEF, the Prosecution submits that the mere fact that the Judge at a time before she was a Judge of the Special Court, was one of more than 50 different people who "reviewed the draft" and "supported the drafting process" can hardly be regarded as a close connection or relationship with UNICEF. As to the Executive Masters Programme in Children's

Rights run by the University of Freiburg and the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch, the Prosecution submits that it is difficult to understand what the Defence's concern is. In light of all these arguments, the Prosecution submits that the Appeals Chamber should rule that there is no basis for the recusal or disqualification of Judge Renate Winter on any of the grounds advanced in the Recusal Motion filed by the Defence.

Ansoko

Friday April 16, 2004

The News

Thursday April 15, 2004

Guest Writer

A Misplaced Indictment!

By Mani N. Sorie

As Prosecutors and Defence Attorneys dust their wigs and robes to brace up for west africa's most controversial tribunal, many Sierra Leoneans, somewhere in the western hemisphere, would begin to reminisce the nightmarish war years. Time may fix and mellow their griefs but never could they be obliterated. To some, those horrendous years now remain shadows at the periphery of their visions as they now live side by side with their former tormentors. Lets pause for a moment and imagine there was no resistance to the unspeakable atrocities that characterised the war, what would have become of the country today is anybody's guess. Confronting those heinous crimes hatched and perpetrated hugely by the RUF bush rats helped expose the hopeless imperfection and futility of their campaign in a war that was dictated by no rules. A war that left most bread winners of families reduced to mere shadows of their enviable past. Even as the RUF and its surrogates engaged in their orgy of destruction, the UN and other world bodies only held their breath and watched the carnage unfold

like a movie on a screen. Those who could afford, fled the country while some patriotic sons and daughters stayed behind and refused to bow to the violence of a few hoodlums. With their collective resilience, they put up a stout resistance and succeeded in saving the country from disintegration. Sam Hinga Norman was seen as the inspirational figure for these flock of patriots. But the man is today being used as a fodder and dumped in a Special Court detention facility, confronted with a marathon psychological war as he whiles away his days. Many Sierra Leoneans remain rattled by this development and wonder whether Norman deserves this type of pay cheque. In David Crain's United States, where public opinion weighs over the courts, the scenario that saw Hinga Norman behind bars could never have passed without incident. I am not a rabble-rouser but that is the fact. Prosecutor Crain's misplaced indictment of Norman could be interpreted as a loss of focus on the part of the Special Court. Most of those who "bear the greatest responsibility" for crimes against humanity are either dead or on the run. RUF's main backer Charles Taylor, is hibernating against

more to the Nigeria president uncle Segun's hospitality than just airlifting Taylor from the Executive Mansion to grant him asylum. Nigeria has now become the mecca for deposed dictators as another ousted president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide of the Caribbean state of Haiti is also destined for that west african state in a couple of months. I do not disfavour the Special Court as it has now become human proclivity to hold responsible those who commit crimes against humanity. But where do we draw the line between those who plot and intentionally perpetrate crimes against humanity and those who try to prevent such crimes? In confronting the latter, one must accept some necessary excesses on the part of any liberation force as such excesses could never have been planned and executed intentionally. In the case of the RUF and its alliance "sobel" forces, all the atrocities perpetrated by them were not only designed and intentionally carried out but were also seen as a premeditated aggression against the people of this country. The only option now left at the disposal of all freeborn beneficiaries of the peace and freedom which Norman epitomises, is to come out and solidarise with this patriot who is being villified and put on the same criminal platform with butchers and terrorists.

Special Equipment

Kabbah shares RUF peace deal with Muslim leaders

President Kabbah was in Istanbul, Turkey last week where he shared his country's experience in negotiating peace with the erstwhile Revolution-

ary United Front, (RUF) rebels at this year's Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World.

According to State Lodge sources, "As a political leader with experience in democratic governance, President Kabbah was asked to participate in the

congress and work with fellow political leaders to build on the progress already made in the Islamic World, including the Sierra Leone government's successful partnership with the local Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, (IRCSL)," in bringing

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From front page

peace to Sierra Leone.

"Apart from delivering a keynote address, the President also participated in working sessions and plenary discussions to highlight progress already being made as well as discuss next steps on issues such as: Learning from recent advances in democratic governance, Implementing democratic legal systems compatible with Islamic laws, Strengthening relationships between civil society and political organisations, Empowering women and

young people to shape the future of their countries among others," State Lodge confirmed.

He is said to have also held a preliminary meeting with former US Secretary of State and chairperson of the congress' co-host National Democratic Institute (NDI), Madeleine Albright where he made a brief statement about his administration's ongoing efforts at rebuilding the nation's local governance structure to ensure the participation of women and youths in national development.

Concord Times

Friday April 16, 2004

The News

Thursday April 15, 2004

Police, Soja Brouhaha...

I.G Acha Kamara Condemns Army

By Agnes Pratt

The Inspector General of Police Brima Acha Kamara has vehemently condemned the military for their act of brutality against police personnel at East End Police station Easter Monday.

He was speaking at the usual weekly press briefing past Tuesday.

Acha registered his

dissatisfaction over the beating of police officers by military personnel. He disclosed that the incident occurred when

a man who was later identified as captain Mohamed Jalloh was apprehended by a police officer for obstruction of traffic rules during a parade of masked devils. The military officer

was later taken to Eastern Police station and detained.

After a while, some group of military personnel stormed the police station, beating up police officers without enquiring the cause of the arrest of their colleague.

"It is really surprising as the SLP and the RSLAF are seen to be partners in development", he emphasized, adding,

"but the soldiers are always in the habit of taking advantages by beating up police personnel." He stressed that the SLP will not tolerate such actions any more as stiff action is going to be taken whenever investigations are concluded.

The military on their part could not be reached for their reaction to the police allegations as we went to bed.





UNMIL

UNMIL/PIO/PR/61

Press release, 15 April 2004

Disarmament begins in Gbarnga

(*Monrovia, Liberia*) – Today, 255 combatants of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), including 35 children, disarmed to UN peacekeepers in Gbarnga, Bong County. The exercise in Gbarnga marked the resumption of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) program, led by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in collaboration with UN agencies and implementing partners. The program is aimed at disarming approximately 40,000 combatants.

Disarmament began early this morning with combatants assembling in an orderly manner at three pick-up points in Gbarnga, UNMIL's Sector Three military headquarters. They were then transported by UNMIL peacekeepers to the disarmament site to surrender their weapons. Combatants were in high spirits, singing and cheering as UNMIL trucks carried them to the disarmament site.

Following disarmament, ex-combatants were taken to a nearby cantonment site. Ex-combatants will spend one week in the cantonment site for demobilization before being discharged to their home communities, where they will be provided with skills training and educational opportunities to assist with their reintegration into society.

Disarmament will also commence in other locations around the country this month – in Buchanan on 20 April, to be followed by Tubmanburg and VOA, near Monrovia. Two-hundred and fifty combatants are to be disarmed per location per day.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of UN Operations in Liberia Jacques Paul Klein praised the collective efforts of UNMIL peacekeepers and civilian staff, UN agencies, implementing partners, the National Transitional Government and the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration – all of whom worked “day and night” over the past several months to ensure the earliest possible resumption of the DDRR program.

“It is a credit to all of you that we have been able to come this far in such a short period of time,” the Special Representative said. “Let us build on today's success to ensure a better tomorrow for all of Liberia's citizens – a tomorrow where this nation's children are armed with pens and pencils instead of guns.”

From a security standpoint, UNMIL Force Commander Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande said the disarmament exercise had proceeded today without incident. “Weeks and months of planning and ensuring that we had the necessary men and women to do the job finally paid off,” he said. The Force Commander noted that the work done to sensitize the combatants and to resolve recent internal disputes had also contributed to the smooth unfolding of the DDRR exercise.

“The combatants cooperated with us and came in an orderly manner. I am encouraged and I would request all those who have not yet disarmed to take a cue from what has happened today in Gbarnga. In other words, cooperate with UNMIL and do the right thing,” Lt. Gen. Opande said.

For additional information contact the Public Information Office
United Nations Mission in Liberia, Tubman Boulevard, Congotown (Monrovia), Liberia
Phone + (1-212) 963-9926/27 extension 4213 or 4222
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Friday, April 16, 2004, 11:32

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AFRICA

UN gets second chance to disarm Liberia

Terence Sesay | Gbarnga, Liberia

15 April 2004 17:55

The United Nations tried for a second time on Thursday to disarm Liberia's estimated 45 000 combatants, hoping that a five-month public awareness campaign will pay off and help the West African state take a giant step towards lasting peace.

UN peacekeepers operating in and around the central town of Gbarnga, a stronghold of the main rebel organisation Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd), began relieving fighters of their weapons and ammunition early on Thursday morning.

By midday, according to UN Mission in Liberia (Unmil) spokesperson Margaret Novicki, a team of Bangladeshi peacekeepers had already processed 255 rebels, five more than their daily quota.

Hundreds more combatants had lined up to hand over their weapons.

"It is going very well, the combatants are being very cooperative," she said from the capital, Monrovia. "There have been no security incidents."

Unmil considers disarmament pivotal to efforts to reconcile Liberia after 14 years of nearly relentless war that ended in August last year with a power-sharing pact and the flight into exile of former president Charles Taylor.

The accord mandated that all three warring factions -- Lurd, its Côte d'Ivoire-supported offshoot, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model), and Taylor's armed forces -- disarm under a program costing about \$50-million.

On Tuesday the campaign will kick off in the port city of Buchanan and five days later in Tubmanburg, from where Lurd launched its offensive on Monrovia in early 2003.

The staggered start is a precaution in view of December's disastrous launch, when thousands of fighters flooded a lone cantonment site just outside of Monrovia, overtaxing the understaffed UN mission that had arrived just two months earlier.

Dissatisfied with the incentive package of \$300, food rations and vocational training, fighters ran riot in the streets of Monrovia for three days, leaving at least 12 dead. The campaign was aborted after just a week.

Mindful of the confusion and misinformation that conspired to sink the campaign in its early days, Unmil has since bombarded radio airwaves and blanketed villages with cartoon flyers and posters explaining the disarmament process.

A travelling song-and-dance revue, replete with skits, musical numbers and a comedian known as Boutini, also toured the Atlantic coastal nation of 3,3-million for eight weeks to promote disarmament.

The musical show has been a "very effective way" to communicate

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information to both the civilian and fighting populations, Novicki said.

Combatants, too, have gotten in to the musical act, she added, lending their voices to a bittersweet tune entitled *That's the Way Life Goes*.

Concerns about the success of the programme continue to trouble many in Liberia, especially as the country remains volatile and few communities have an infrastructure adequate to support even civilian populations, let alone hundreds of newly disarmed fighters who know nothing but combat.

In a report released this week, the Britain-based NGO Oxfam said some civilians were resentful that former fighters were being compensated and provided with skills training while they were struggling to survive.

Others expressed fears that without supervision some of the young combatants would easily return to arms; still others expressed reluctance to welcome soldiers back into their communities.

Leaders of the three warring factions have also complained that their troops were unlikely to be offered adequate training that would make them assets to their communities.

"The UN and others must ensure that our fighters are well taken care of and registered for vocational and skills training," General Roland Duo, a senior commander in the dismantled armed forces of Taylor, was quoted as saying by the UN news agency Irin.

"With this they would not focus their minds on returning to war." -- Sapa-AFP

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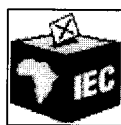
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UN tries to disarm Liberia

16/04/2004 09:33 - (SA)

Gbarnga, Liberia - Disarmament of Liberia's estimated 45 000 fighters resumed on Thursday in the central rebel stronghold of Gbarnga, five months after the campaign was launched only to be swiftly aborted by the United Nations.

UN Mission in Liberia spokesperson Margaret Novicki said from the capital Monrovia that peacekeepers began relieving fighters of their weapons and ammunition early Thursday morning.

Each fighter will receive \$150, food rations and preliminary vocational training during a seven-day stay at the cantonment site set up in Gbarnga and another \$150 once they are returned to their communities.

On Tuesday the campaign will kick off in the port city of Buchanan and five days later in Tubmanburg, from where the main rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd) launched their offensive on Monrovia in early 2003.

Unmil considers disarmament to be pivotal to efforts to return a lasting peace to the west African state riven by 14 years of nearly relentless war that ended in August last year with a power-sharing pact and the flight into exile of former president Charles Taylor.

The disarmament campaign got off to a rocky start in December when thousands of soldiers from Taylor's armies flooded a lone cantonment site just outside of Monrovia, overtaxing the understaffed UN mission that had arrived just two months earlier.

Fighters ran riot

Dissatisfied with the incentives they were offered, fighters ran riot in the streets of Monrovia for three days, leaving at least 12 dead. The campaign was aborted after just a week.

Since December, UNMIL has bombarded radio airwaves with explanations of the disarmament process and mounted a song-and-dance revue which traveled around the Atlantic coastal nation of 3.3 million to promote the campaign.

But concerns about the effectiveness of the campaign still linger, with leaders of the



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three warring factions complaining that their troops were unlikely to be provided with adequate skills that would make them assets to their communities.

"The UN and others must ensure that our fighters are well taken care of and registered for vocational and skills training," General Roland Duo, a senior commander in the dismantled armed forces of Taylor, was quoted as saying by the UN news agency IRIN.

"With this they would not focus their minds on returning to war."

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Wiranto's presidential bid unlikely to face international opposition

Muladi, Senior Lecturer, Diponegoro University, Jakarta

The opinion aired by Jusuf Wanandi in his article entitled *Poll Results Boost Golkar's Chance for the Presidency* in *The Jakarta Post* on April 12 is truly appreciated. Specifically, the possibility that the Golkar Party's triumph in the April 5 legislative election would make it the largest faction of the House of Representatives (DPR) -- now a tremendously powerful institution under the new Constitution.

The chance for a Golkar candidate to win the presidency is wide open and realistic. Therefore, the upcoming Golkar convention -- slated for April 20 -- at which the party's presidential candidate will be chosen, is not only imperative to Golkar, but will also influence the future of this country.

For the country, which currently experiences a "leadership crisis", a strong and democratically elected president would be strategic in light of the complexity of challenges that must be faced in the future.

But with all due respect toward Jusuf's freedom of expression, his article was also extremely disturbing, specifically the part -- which could be perceived as a "character assassination" -- in which he spoke of Wiranto, one of the candidates to contest the Golkar convention. This "character assassination" could even be termed "hideous" by readers of his article.

Jusuf presented a subjective and superficial perspective, using political analysis heedlessly by substituting presumption of innocence with presumption of guilt.

Each member of Golkar will sincerely accept the winner of the Golkar convention (including Akbar Tandjung), if the convention is carried out in a free and fair manner. Although, fears have mounted that the brilliant idea of the convention could have a boomerang effect on Golkar, if the convention were to be executed through manipulative and deceitful actions.

Jusuf states that Wiranto's presidential bid would be a disaster for Indonesia and claims that the West and Japan are against his candidacy. It is also the well-established policy of foreign governments (and in particular those of the West) not to give, or even to suggest, support or non-support for the presidential candidates of another country.

During a series of meetings, which Wiranto held with foreign dignitaries, including the ambassadors of "friendly" countries, such an impression never surfaced. The only concern raised was over democratic procedures, which the diplomats hoped would be undertaken during the presidential election -- and that they would accept whoever became president.

It is logical, however, for elements of society and the international community to state their personal attitudes toward Wiranto, or any other candidate. It would be illogical if a statement of the pros and cons of a candidate's election disclosed a one-sided judgment, and bypassed ethical norms, as well as the prevailing law.

Stating Wiranto would face opposition from students, civilians and the mass media, should

he become Golkar's presidential candidate, does not fully reflect upon reality. True, there would be some negative reaction, but that should be seen as the dynamics of democracy.

Jusuf is thought to acknowledge that, even though the United Nations Security Council has the authority to form an international criminal tribunal specifically for the East Timor case, the "complementary" principles of international law underline that in bringing to justice gross violations of human rights -- which implement "concurrent jurisdiction" between international and national courts -- the domestic mechanism through the national court is the "Primary Forum" option. The East Timor case is similar to cases in Rwanda (ICTR) and Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as well as the "hybrid model" in Sierra Leone and the Serious Crime Unit of Timor Leste.

Thus, exceptions may only occur if national court proceedings (similar to the Indonesian human rights court based on Law No.26/2000) are not conducted independently or impartiality and are merely aimed at protecting the perpetrators -- a reflection that it is unwilling and unable to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The "complementary" principles also comprise the need of the international community to respect the process of investigation of the state which has jurisdiction. Unless, however, that particular state has decided not to prosecute -- when these actions are a reflection of an unwilling attitude.

In terms of the East Timor case, several officers and generals of the military and police had been investigated, and were brought before the human rights court. Others, including Wiranto, were acquitted due to inadequate evidence.

Furthermore, the question remains, is it really true that Wiranto and military members committed war crimes and crimes against humanity ?

In East Timor, during the referendum, there was no sign of war. Internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots and isolated and sporadic acts of violence between pro-independence and pro-integration groups, were not related to war crimes. These events were triggered by mounting tension over the referendum process faced by the two sides.

If the involvement of the military and the police in the field was discovered, these were perceived as sporadic or isolated crimes -- which ought to have been dealt with through a civil or martial court based on ordinary criminal law.

Also, regarding the 1998 May Riots, Wiranto in his memoir entitled *Witness in the Storm (Bersaksi di Tengah Badai)* explained in detail from pages 51 onward, the possibility that the mass movement striving for political interests was "used" by instigators, looters and muggers. Therefore, it was a formidable task to neutralize the situation.

As for the Trisakti and Semanggi cases, according to procedures under Law No. 26/2000, each individual suspected of involvement in those incidents underwent a transparent and open hearing process of the DPR's special committee, which later stated that there was no evidence of gross human rights violations.

The writer was formerly minister of justice under Soeharto's administration and minister of justice and state secretary under BJ Habibie's administration.



Building Peace in West Africa

Africa Recovery (New York)

INTERVIEW

April 15, 2004

Posted to the web April 15, 2004

Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas was elected executive secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) by the region's heads of state, and took up his duties in February 2002. At the time, he was a member of parliament in Ghana, after previously holding several cabinet positions, including deputy minister of foreign affairs. He took part in Commonwealth missions to facilitate transitions to constitutional rule in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, and between 1991 and 1996 was centrally involved in ECOWAS mediation efforts in Liberia. In New York for an International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia in early February, he shared with Africa Recovery his thoughts on the challenges of bringing peace to West Africa.

When ECOWAS was originally formed, its main mission was to promote the region's economic integration. But in recent years, a number of countries in the region have experienced severe internal conflicts. To what extent have peace and security issues become a greater concern for ECOWAS, and how have they affected other aspects of the organization's activities?

Chambas: You're right. From the name, it's an economic community. It was designed by the founding fathers to increase economic cooperation and see how the countries of the subregion could work together to improve economic performance, benefit from economies of scale and achieve greater integration. Regrettably, particularly over the last decade and a half, the prevalence of conflicts in the subregion has distracted our countries from concentrating on development.

Happily, we may be seeing a turn for the better, a reduction in conflicts. Working with the international community, we have brought the situation in Sierra Leone under control. Sierra Leone today is one of the happy stories in West Africa. In the last year, we have seen tremendous progress in Liberia. We hope that this time around we will be able to bring closure to this very sad chapter in the history of Liberia. The conflict that erupted in Côte d'Ivoire could have had very destabilizing consequences if ECOWAS had not moved in a timely fashion. We have gotten the support of the international community, in

particular France, but also the US, the UK, the Netherlands and the EU. They have been very supportive of us in arresting that situation.

But all these activities mean that I, as chief executive, have to devote a lot of my time addressing these issues, rather than looking at how we can establish free trade in West Africa, build a regional infrastructure to improve communications and the road network ? which would enhance our competitiveness ? and how we can build a customs union. Yet progress has been slow because of the inordinate time spent on peace and security issues. Yet at the same time we know that without a solid foundation of peace, security and stability, whatever efforts we make in the area of socio-economic development will come to naught.

ECOWAS has already been very active in peacekeeping efforts. Should it be doing more to try to prevent conflicts beforehand, through political mediation, as happened after the September 2003 military coup in Guinea-Bissau?

Chambas: We have to get more pre-emptive, anticipate and have early warning systems in place. We are strengthening our capacity in that area. We have now four regional bureaus, observatories, which are supposed to do a deeper analysis of the situation in the cluster of countries that each bureau covers. They are to send us signals if a situation may be heating up politically. We also have a Council of Elders that we can use to try to defuse the situation. We are also using the mechanism of our meetings of heads of state to see how, among themselves, they can talk frankly to each other and prevent situations from getting out of hand. Regrettably, we have not shown the courage and the determination to move in a timely fashion to prevent situations of crisis from deepening. And when it has gotten out of hand, it has cost us in the subregion and the wider international community much more to resolve the crisis then. So you will see more activity from ECOWAS in the area of early warning, in the area of preventative and pre-emptive diplomacy.

In Liberia last year, ECOWAS was very quick in getting peacekeeping troops on the ground. Those forces have now been brought into the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). What is the role of ECOWAS now in Liberia?

Chambas: We still have a role to play. The comprehensive peace agreement envisages an implementation monitoring committee, to be chaired by the special representative of the executive secretary of ECOWAS. So ECOWAS has opened an office in Liberia and the special representative is in the field working hand-in-glove with the UN and members of the International Contact Group present in Liberia, namely the US, Nigeria, Ghana and EU. The committee is important to follow through on the implementation of all aspects of the agreement, especially the political aspect, so it does not become a bottleneck to the peace process. We have to hold the Liberian parties to their obligations and their responsibilities and make sure they cooperate fully, so that this time around durable peace will come.

What are the challenges of trying to deal with issues of peace and security on a regional level?

Chambas: This is a major challenge. The interlocking nature of the various crises ? the rebel movements, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across weak frontiers ? these have been contributory factors to the crises spilling over from one country to the other. It started in Liberia, which was more or less the epicentre of the instability. From there it spilled over to Sierra Leone. And then we saw how quickly the same elements - the armed groups, the mercenaries - were able to join the fray in Côte d'Ivoire.

So we are advocating strongly that a regional approach be adopted to resolving these crises. They cannot be dealt with in isolation from each other. We have to see the interlinkages. We have to strengthen the border patrols, so that there are sufficient troops placed at the borders to prevent easy movement of these armed groups from one country to the other. We have to intensify efforts to control the proliferation, spread and smuggling of small arms and light weapons.

The biggest opportunity to end these conflicts will come if the Security Council authorizes a mission in Côte d'Ivoire [see box] at the same time there is a mission in Liberia and Sierra Leone. We can then engage in effective disarmament in all three countries. We also have to more or less synchronize the withdrawal of our forces, so that we don't withdraw prematurely from a country and give an opportunity to armed groups to move in. If we were to totally withdraw all the forces and close down UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, while the operations are still going on in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, the hard core elements are likely to regroup and find their way to Sierra Leone. That could threaten all the progress we have achieved in Sierra Leone.

There have often been accusations that some governments in the region have been providing support, transit routes or refuge for rebel groups in neighbouring countries. Does ECOWAS have some means of getting its own members to behave?

Chambas: I think even as we have tried to handle the situation in these countries, one of the things we have insisted on is the ECOWAS protocol on non-aggression. In the past, the enforcement of this protocol has not been effective, and we are the first to admit that. Groups have crossed from one country to another to foment trouble, without the consent of the governments of neighbouring countries ? but also often with the tacit support of some governments. Obviously, this situation is unacceptable. It is not in the interest of peace and stability in the subregion. We now have many member states calling for a review of this protocol, in order to strengthen it.

In the past, the international community often dealt with such crises on a country-by-country basis. Do you see movement on the part of the donors in looking at these problems in more of a regional framework?

Chambas: That is the message we are getting. There is an understanding of the interrelatedness of the situation in different countries. In certain conflicts we have seen

that instability in one country can trigger instability in a neighbouring country. So it is a healthy development that our partners are beginning to appreciate this, and to agree with us that we need to approach peace and security in a global fashion. They are seeing that you cannot create an island of peace and security in one country when there are so many hotspots of tension and conflict in the subregion.

What do you see as the ideal division of labour between the international community and African governments in peacekeeping activities?

Chambas: We deeply and seriously believe in finding African solutions to African problems. We have seen in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire that ECOWAS has responded very actively and quickly. It has been involved directly in mediation efforts, in trying to find a political settlement. When it has become necessary for a military response, we have been willing to provide the personnel. Our limitation is that as developing countries, with poor economies, we do not have the financial resources to support our troops. This is where we have called on our partners to provide us with the materiel and the funding to enable us to engage in these missions. But we ourselves believe that it is our responsibility, which we are happy to take on, to provide the troops. If a larger force is required, then others can come and support us. But we are not shy about taking the initiative.

New UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire

Following the outbreak of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002, the main parties in the conflict signed a wide-ranging peace agreement early the following year. Although the government army and opposition military forces remain in control of separate parts of the country, a government of national reconciliation was established with ministers from both sides. France sent 4,000 troops and ECOWAS dispatched a force of 1,300 to monitor the agreement, alongside a small UN liaison mission, known as the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI). On 4 February 2004, the UN Security Council agreed to transform MINUCI into a regular UN peacekeeping mission as of 4 April, to be called the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

UNOCI will have an authorized military and police strength of 6,240. Its mandate includes monitoring the ceasefire, assisting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, helping investigate human rights abuses and supporting the peace process so that new presidential elections can be held in 2005. According to the Security Council resolution, UNOCI is to work closely with the UN missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, "especially in the prevention of movements of arms and combatants across shared borders and the implementation of disarmament and mobilization programmes."