

PREFACE

This research was undertaken by the Peace Missions Programme (PMP) at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) to assess the role and contribution of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the protection of civilians. This book presents the results of the research and is intended to promote the development of a comprehensive and workable set of doctrinal principles for peacekeeping/peace enforcement in Africa by the African Union (AU) and the African regional organisations that are operating under UN authority.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, the conflict that engulfed Liberia from 1989 until 1997 was the first intrastate conflict on the African continent that entailed considerable humanitarian crisis, but one to which the international community paid scant attention. The international community only questioned the political and legal basis for the intervention of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), in spite of its moral obligation to address the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.

The relapse of Liberia into another conflict in 2003, accompanied by another humanitarian crisis involving mostly the civilian population, is hardly surprising because the support that the international community provided in the 1990s was too little and too late to ensure sustainable peace-building based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance. Armed with the lessons from the failure to protect civilians in armed conflict, the international community collaborated more closely with ECOWAS, which, again, led efforts to intervene in Liberia in order to save the country from the humanitarian catastrophe.

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Festus B Aboagye & Alhaji M S Bah
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