

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the Workshop was an extremely informative and rewarding exercise. Contributions and ensuing discussions were frank, differentiated and rich. In particular, those from the field provided a rich source of facts and information. Peace operations undertaken and the ones in progress in Côte d'Ivoire were reviewed and unsolved problems identified in addition to the lessons learned. This resulted in an appraisal of the entire peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as some basic recommendations.

Côte d'Ivoire's peace process has made significant advances in a remarkably short period of time. The ceasefire agreement, signed over a year ago, has largely been observed. The period of actual combat was relatively short, and the levels of destruction and casualties suffered during the crisis have been low – indeed, way below that suffered in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, with which the Ivorian crisis has been linked.

The character of the conflict itself raises questions as to whether the genocide in Rwanda or the state failure in Liberia is the right model of comparison for understanding the conflict dynamics in Côte d'Ivoire. The humanitarian catastrophe that was feared - the real fear of an ethnic cleansing campaign - has not happened, although parts of the country have suffered from shortages of basic necessities. Thus the Liberian dynamics of state failure and greed driven violence is perceived as closer to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire than the Rwandan genocide. This notwithstanding, genocidal events cannot be ruled out in Côte d'Ivoire.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive peace agreement, though controversial, has been signed, and all the warring parties have accepted its principles and many of its details. A large UN force, backed by a muscular French military presence, and which incorporated troops from ECOWAS states, has been deployed. A comprehensive programme of disarmament and demobilization of combatants has been worked out, and awaits full implementation.

ECOWAS was initially instrumental in getting the parties to the conflict talking, resulting in securing a Ceasefire Agreement in Lomé on 17 October 2002. ECOWAS, the UN, France and the African Union facilitated the Round Table

which gave birth to the Linas–Marcoussis Agreement on 24 January 2003. The Conference of Kléber, assembled by France and facilitated by the UN Secretary General gave action and moral integrity to the Agreement on 26 January 2001. The subsequent convening of the UN Security Council stamped its endorsement and authority on the Agreement. The Council (by Resolution 1474 of 4 February 2003) authorized the deployment of ECOWAS troops supported by the Licorne force with the monitoring presence of a fledgling UN peace mission later to be baptized as MINUCI, (in the charge of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Albert Tevoedjre who is also chair of the Monitoring Committee of ten representatives of States and international institutions, established by the Linas–Marcoussis Agreement).

This is an instructive example of the Security Council's establishing a peace mission side by side with endorsing peacekeeping operations by ECOWAS forces under regional arrangements, with the support of a virtual Rapid Response Capability provided by the French Licorne forces, composed initially of troops stationed in Côte d'Ivoire under a bilateral Defence arrangement.

The intervening military forces acting in Côte d'Ivoire from 2003 (Operation Licorne, ECOMICI, UNOCI) were complementary in their operations. Operation Licorne served, largely, as a major stabilizing factor. Two developments might have contributed in particular to the positive perception of the French military intervention. The first is the fundamental change in the character of French intervention and how it is conducted; and secondly that the perception of Africans regarding French interventions has changed accordingly. Yet, at least for some, the colonial past may still challenge the legitimacy of such interventions.

ECOMICI had some strengths and also encountered some weaknesses. Its strengths were reflected in the common cultural background of the ECOMOG forces with the local population; knowledge of the environment; the bilingual status of most officers (although differences in language still remain a fundamental problem for ECOWAS contingents); the culture of discussion encouraged among local actors; and prior training and exercises in relevant peacekeeping institutions including, in particular, the KAIPTC. The shortcomings centred on: the lack of financial resources; lack of support and no clear directives from the ECOWAS Secretariat, especially at the beginning of operations; differing views on priorities; lack of leverage on contributing countries; and the lack of an integrated logistics plan.

UNOCI has to contend with the usual patterns of delay of UN deployment. ECOWAS forces greatly facilitated its presence through the rehatting of ECOMICI into UNOCI. Currently UNOCI is confronted with the problem of keeping a

peace that is non-existent. There is neither peace nor war. The population is insufficiently informed about the mandate of UNOCI, with particular regard to the limits of the mandate. Better information via the UN Radio, therefore, would be crucial in preventing further disappointment in the population and abuse by parties to the conflict.

ECOMICI, MINUCI (and now UNOCI), France and the Licorne force - have been the pillars of the regional and international community in facilitating the construction of the building blocks and laying the foundations for the peace structure in Côte d'Ivoire. The central actors, obviously, are the Ivorian political forces, signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement lays out the road map for the peace process to guide the actions of all: Ivorians, ECOWAS and sub-regional leaders and communities, especially the immediate neighbours of Côte d'Ivoire; France in its special historical relations with Côte d'Ivoire, the UN (from MINUCI to UNOCI); the Monitoring Committee and the military forces on the ground; ECOMICI (now UNOCI); Licorne; and the Military Liaison Officers of MINUCI, working to forge cooperation between FANCI and the Armed Wing of the Forces nouvelles Movement.

Yet, there are some problematic aspects. For one, it appears that the Accord might be overambitious, especially with regard to the timeframe of its implementation. The Accord also seems to give legitimacy to rebel factions which had striven for unconstitutional change in the country. Judging from other peace processes, pushing too hastily for a comprehensive implementation of the Accord might lead to an explosive situation. Patience is thus needed, and the timing and sequence of the implementation has to be adjusted to the situation on the ground.

Again, despite some hopeful progress made in the Ivorian peace process, implementation remains the basic and totally unsolved problem of the Accord. At present the process is blocked, for several reasons:

- First, all parties to the conflict seem to have a hidden agenda although they have signed the Accord;
- Second, there is a complete lack of confidence and trust on all sides;
- Third, due to this mistrust and the uncertain political climate, the Government of Reconciliation which is crucial for the implementation of the Accord is not functioning; and last but not least

- A high level of impunity on all sides is obstructing the peace process.

The peace process is therefore at a crossroad, and the situation is becoming very tense. There seems to be a real danger of secession by the North, while there is growing dissatisfaction within the population about the lack of progress in the peace process in Côte d' Ivoire. This has translated into the loss of confidence in UNOCI activities and its initial limited impact.

Three major difficulties are identified as blocking the peace process. Firstly, the anti-government Forces nouvelles, accusing the Gbagbo government of bad faith, have refused to be disarmed ahead of the elections in 2005. The government on its part claims that logistical arrangements with respect to the electoral process are hampered by the fact that the rebels are holding on to half of the country, preventing officials from gaining unimpeded access to those areas. Similarly, humanitarian assistance to some parts of the country controlled by the rebel forces has been impossible because of logistical and security reasons.

Secondly, there is a marked reluctance on the part of both parties to adhere fully to the provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, but there is no alternative to the full implementation of the agreement if the peace process is to go ahead. Thus, in effect, The Government of Reconciliation is not functioning due to the fact that the opposition and rebel groups have abandoned it.

Thirdly, critical issues concerning the legal regulation of land tenure and ownership, electoral law, citizenship and the eligibility as president have not been resolved.

Some controversies characterise the effectiveness of the State in Côte d'Ivoire with regard to whether the State is still functioning and if the government in Abidjan is the only legal and legitimate actor. The fact remains, however, that the basic elements of a functioning state are still in place: the constitution, president, government, and infrastructure. The UN and other key actors also face the challenge of managing the issue of the legality of the government in Abidjan and the broader legitimacy of the peace process as initiated by the Marcoussis Accord.

The crisis of youths equally features as a central factor in the Ivorian crisis with much emphasis on youth radicalization and violent actions in the course of the conflict. It is evident that the youth is tired of being told by elders to be patient and to wait for tomorrow - for them there is no tomorrow. In view of the high rate of unemployment such an attitude is not very surprising. Taking up the gun to make a living and for giving perspective to a hopeless situation becomes more

and more attractive. There is a very real danger that the legitimacy of the ballot will be substituted by the legitimacy of the bullet.

The practical implications of the crisis of the youth, how it should be addressed, and the extent to which it becomes a decisive issue for the DDR programme need further appraisal towards the facilitation of the conflict management and resolution processes in Côte d'Ivoire.

Refusal of the rebel factions to disarm before elections has presently blocked the DDR programme. The planning of the DDR programme, which is under the national authority of Côte d'Ivoire, seems to be of high quality. Nevertheless, the following points are particularly noteworthy:

1. In addition to the difficulties in the field, the first stages of the planning of DDR programme were hampered by complicated administrative procedures which had been set as prerequisites by donors and bilateral partners.
2. On the military level, the Forces nouvelles seem to be quite prepared to cooperate despite the blockage of the DDR process on the political level.
3. A positive contribution is also to be expected to come from the UN Radio station which will be on air soon. It was recommended that the station should be used extensively to inform and sensitize the population and those to be disarmed.
4. The harmonization of the various DDR programmes in West Africa is urgently needed due to the interlinked nature of the conflicts in the region.
5. All combatants recruited after the failed coup of 19th September 2002 are to be disarmed and demobilized (about 4,000 fighters from the South, and 25 - 30,000 from the North). Each disarmed individual will receive \$ 900 subsistence payment.
6. It may be difficult to distinguish between Ivorians and non-Ivorians in the disarmament process.

Implementation of the DDR programme has not yet begun due to its political blockage and as a result, its practical difficulties remain to be seen. A successful DDR will, however, make the decisive difference between peace and a return to war.

There has been no lack of efforts to persuade the Ivorian parties to “come into their own”; assume their responsibilities; put an end to the undesirable resort to the practice of boycott of the government; agree to pursuing continual dialogue and negotiations over their mutual grievances and differences within the framework of the Government; and ensure the smooth passage of legislation as envisaged under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. That way the Government of National Reconciliation would advance, without unnecessary obstacles, towards the organization and conduct of free, fair and transparent elections scheduled for October 2005

The political impasse in the government, aggravated by the events of 25 March 2004 and the ripples produced by the findings of the International Commission of Enquiry, all have cast an ominous shadow on the peace process. A lot needs to be done to heal wounds and regain a firm handle on the situation in order to address the challenges facing the peace process.

The first of these is the risk of “moral fatigue” with the peace implementation process in the face of the current agonizing stalemate in Côte d’Ivoire. In effect we need to look into the prospects and challenges of external involvement as against external interference. We may start with the UN’s involvement – peace making, peace building and peacekeeping - by the side of the Ivorian actors in strict compliance with decisions of the UN Security Council. We should then proceed to examine and see where to prevent any action from any quarter which might smack of “interference” with a hidden agenda contrary to the letter and spirit of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. That way we can redress the balance between positive involvement and the risk of indifference and disengagement.

Secondly, we should learn to manage the complex nexus of relations represented by international pressures exerted on the Ivorian actors, the active involvement of the international community in encouraging programmemes of stabilization, security, democratic governance, economic reconstruction, observance of norms of Rule of law and Human Rights.

Thirdly, we need to examine the competing demands, on the one hand, between resources expended on emergency programmemes of peace-keeping including humanitarian assistance and pacification; and, on the other, resources devoted to “preventive peace building” which constitutes an “agenda for development”. This concept is inspired by the fundamental objective of meeting peoples’ aspirations and needs for security, sense of identity and worth, and a reasonable standard of living.

Finally, the practical challenge is to take firm measures to assist ECOWAS to improve and re-enforce its institutional capacity to undertake its increasing responsibilities to prevent and manage conflicts particularly in close coordination with the United Nations. These challenges, like the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, constitute a substantial menu of prescriptions to offer relief and remedy for the sufferings of the people of Côte d'Ivoire. The capitals in West Africa as well as the leading international powers and international organizations have to vigorously re-engage to put the peace process back on track. This will need a clear political will and strong diplomacy. The blockage of the peace process and in particular the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Accord has to be overcome. Otherwise the presence of international peacekeepers will be in vain. There is a very real danger of the country plunging back into violence.

The potency of these prescriptions, and the very future of the peace process, and the country, depends effectively and ultimately on the will of the Ivorian people.