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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

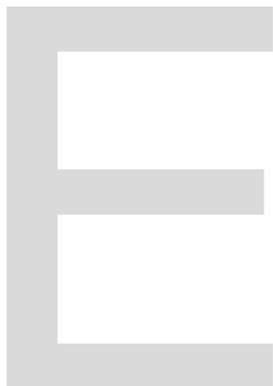
(d) Seminar for African parliaments on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 22-23 February 2016 – Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

As part of its disarmament and counter-terrorism activities, the IPU has focused on ways to mobilize parliamentarians on the question of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) including in terms of working towards the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540. The resolution stipulates that States have a mandatory obligation to adopt legislation designed to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, and to put in place appropriate domestic measures, both to control WMD-related materials, and also to prevent their being trafficked or falling into the hands of terrorist groups and other non-State actors.

With the support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the IPU and the Parliament of Côte d'Ivoire worked together to organize a regional seminar for African parliaments on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540. The seminar was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 22 and 23 February 2016. More than 90 people attended, including 76 members of parliament from 18 parliaments. This was the first time that parliamentarians from one continent had come together to discuss the implementation of resolution 1540.

The primary aim of the seminar was to strengthen the awareness of members of parliament from the region of the threat posed by WMDs in the African region, and to encourage parliamentarians to increase their knowledge of the resolution. In addition, the seminar also made it possible to facilitate the exchange of good legislative and regulatory practices among parliamentarians, as well as to encourage members of parliament to forge individual working relationships or to take part in informal cross-border networks.

At the opening meeting, statements were made by Mr. Guillaume Kigbafori Soro, Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, Ms. Ige Olatokunbo, representative of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and Director of the UN Regional Centre, and Mr. Jean-Albert Agbre Touni, Deputy President of the Ivorian IPU national group. Mr. Isidor Marcel Sene, member of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), then delivered the opening address.



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The seminar programme ran for two days. The first day comprised a series of presentations made by resolution 1540 specialists and those with expertise in WMDs and their control. These sessions covered the following topics: (1) The common challenges posed by WMD proliferation in Africa; (2) An overview of resolution 1540; (3) National and regional mechanisms and tools that can be deployed in order to implement resolution 1540; and (4) Sharing experiences about the laws and regulations that have proven most effective in mitigating the threats posed by WMDs and by their falling into the hands of terrorists. The awareness-raising sessions were systematically followed by interactive discussions, facilitated by a moderator.

On the second day, participants divided into an English- and a French-language working group. Facilitators supported each working group. The groups carried out their work during the morning and discussed two subjects: (1) The needs, challenges and opportunities facing African countries in the implementation of resolution 1540; (2) Processes for implementing measures related to resolution 1540. After those discussions, one person was nominated from each group to deliver a presentation in the afternoon on the outcome of the morning deliberations. The day was rounded off by discussions about follow-up to the event and measures that should be taken in order to implement the resolution.

The seminar enabled good practices to be identified, so as to ensure the effective implementation of resolution 1540. A targeted action plan was drafted by the rapporteurs. The full report of the Abidjan Seminar and the parliamentary action plan are being finalized and will be sent to all African parliaments in the coming weeks. The plan includes the drafting of a parliamentary handbook on the implementation of resolution 1540, and the establishment of specialized parliamentary committees for monitoring such implementation and for providing assistance in the drafting of national action plans. National plans will define the areas in which implementation must be strengthened as a matter of priority, and clarify ways in which that can be achieved.

The seminar was the first step towards approaching the subject in close cooperation with United Nations partners of the IPU, particularly the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The IPU intends to follow up this regional seminar by more tightly focused action at the national level, in order to support parliaments wishing to promote the implementation of resolution 1540 and translate those wishes into actions that achieve concrete results.