

PREFACE

Ten years ago, UNIDIR initiated a process of collaboration with West African states and people in the area of practical disarmament and peace building. UNIDIR's commitment aims at facilitating the establishment and strengthening of West African local capacities for the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Institute, which works in partnership with civil society and political authorities, has established close collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Program for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED). These two sub-regional institutions are in charge of development, peace and security issues in general and the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in particular.

Research is UNIDIR's main mission. Therefore, publishing and disseminating information on West African peace efforts is one of its main activities. The documents we publish aim at informing the international community on West African regional initiatives on disarmament and peacebuilding and appeal for stronger support for these peace efforts. These documents also archive, assess and disseminate best local practices, as well as the lessons learned from local disarmament and peacebuilding initiatives.

This joint PCASED/ECOWAS/UNIDIR publication draws its substance from West African arms control and arms regulation experiences. Written by local experts, based and working in West Africa, the *Handbook* is an essential component of efforts aiming at combating the scourge of small arms proliferation and containing violence escalation in the sub-region.

Indeed, armed and security forces have an important role to play in the fight against small arms and light weapons proliferation. For this mission to be effectively fulfilled, these forces have to be adequately trained. To this effect, the training of armed and security forces in practical disarmament measures endow them with moral values and ethical, civic and professional

norms conducive to making them reliable and efficient partners that populations can depend upon.

UNIDIR, in partnership with PCASED and ECOWAS, is happy to publish this *Handbook*. Our wish is that it becomes an essential tool that will strengthen further the sense of duty and accountability amidst armed and security forces. Through this process, we hope to contribute to the edification of the broader objective of consolidation of a durable culture of peace in West Africa.

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