

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The dynamics of small arms and light weapons traffic, circulation and use in West Africa are complex, and result in a tangled web of regional insecurity, violence, illicit acts and criminal networks. Unraveling this web requires human and financial resources, strong organizations and governments, and engaged civil society actors. Woven together to combat the small arms problem, these elements offer both optimism and concrete security benefits at both the human and regional security levels. Civil society, regional organizations and agreements such as the ECOWAS Convention and the Millennium Development Goals are interlinked, their efforts synergistic, and together result in a stronger and more secure region.

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* examines small arms in West Africa, and looks at some of the activities being undertaken to combat the problem, from regional initiatives to civil society projects, from technical and legal fixes to building on the link between disarmament and development.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will kick off our tenth anniversary year. Launched in 1999, *Disarmament Forum* is the sole journal of the United Nations dedicated to disarmament and security issues. Over the last nine years, *Disarmament Forum* has addressed a wide array of subjects, from fissile materials and nuclear terrorism, to regional conflicts, to the role of civil society in disarmament initiatives, and the relationship between human rights and security.

Our anniversary issue will comprise a collection of short, forward-looking contributions by world-renowned experts and personalities from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. All contributors will address the same topic: to share with our readers a single idea to increase security or to significantly influence a specific disarmament issue.

UNIDIR hosted two events in New York during the First Committee of the Sixty-third General Assembly of the United Nations. On 20 October, UNIDIR, the Global Security Institute (GSI) and the Secure World Foundation (SWF) hosted a seminar entitled "Prospects for Preserving a Cooperative Security Framework in Outer Space". The panel, chaired by Ambassador Robert Grey (Director of GSI's Bipartisan Security Group), comprised Dr Ray Williamson (Executive Director of SWF), Victor Vasiliev (Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations in Geneva), and Nicolas Gérard (UNIDIR). Audio files of the presentations are available on UNIDIR's website.

On 22 October, UNIDIR held a seminar to launch the publication *Implementing Resolution 1540: the Role of Regional Organizations*. This seminar presented the research findings of a two-year project to examine the experiences of organizations in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia and the Pacific to identify how they can assist their members with their commitments to implement resolution 1540. UNIDIR Deputy Director Dr Christiane Agboton-Johnson chaired the seminar, with opening remarks by Ambassador Jorge Urbina, Chairman of the 1540 Committee and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations, and by Ambassador Mona Juul, Deputy Permanent

Representative of Norway. The publication's editor, Dr Lawrence Scheinman, spoke on how regional organizations could assist with implementation, and the specific example of South-East Asia and the South Pacific was presented by contributor Tanya Ogilvie-White. You can listen to the presentations as well as download the full text of the publication from our website.

UNIDIR is delighted to announce that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Theresa Hitchens as the Institute's new Director. Ms. Hitchens brings to UNIDIR over twenty years of experience in security, defense, disarmament and non-proliferation research and analysis. She is leaving her position as Director of the Center for Defense Information (CDI) in Washington DC, and where she has led CDI's Space Security Project. Her previous experience includes serving as Research Director of the Washington affiliate of the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), as well as an editor at *Defense News*.

We are also proud to announce that former UNIDIR Director Dr Patricia Lewis has been awarded the 2009 Joseph A. Burton Forum Award from the American Physical Society "for her contributions to arms control and international security, through experiments to demonstrate verifiability of arms control treaties and through her leadership of two international institutes, VERTIC and UNIDIR". Dr Lewis is now Deputy Director and Scientist in Residence at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

***Kerstin Vignard***