

WEST AFRICA

Field presence	OHCHR West Africa Regional Office (WARO), based in Dakar, Senegal Operation established in 2008
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Countries of engagement

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana (no programmatic activities foreseen beside monitoring) and Senegal (complementing the presences in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo) and conducting subregional activities for all countries in the subregion.

Engagement with the human rights mechanisms

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The West Africa region witnessed significant progress towards greater stability and security resulting from, inter alia, the transition processes in Guinea and Niger, the end of the election-related crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as successful democratic elections in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo. Nevertheless, the democratic process continues to evolve and, conversely, to be a challenge for the region's stability.

The region has seen encouraging signs of mainstreaming human rights and gender issues into responses to threats to security, such as the food crisis, climate change, migration and trafficking in persons. Improvements have been made with regard to equal participation of women and men in policymaking bodies, as well as in key State positions. In particular, Senegal has adopted a parity law at the national assembly.

Fundamental freedoms have improved in many countries. However, concern remains in the Gambia with regard to restrictive legislation that penalizes freedom of expression, thus limiting any form of political opposition.

In most countries, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) have been established and contributed to the improvement of human rights monitoring and protection. In addition to these mechanisms, some countries transitioning from conflict to post-conflict, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Togo, have established transitional justice mechanisms. In combating impunity, Senegal paved the way to become the first African State to establish Extraordinary African Chambers, in collaboration

with the African Union, to try international crimes that were committed on the territory of a third party State (Hissen Habré's trial).

There were also some serious setbacks in the progress achieved towards democracy and peace. The conflict in Mali and the growing presence of terrorist groups pose a serious security threat. Along with environmental degradation and man-made crises, they expose the weakness of State institutions and challenge the capacity of the international community to anticipate and address political and security crises.

The Regional Office for West Africa was established in 2008 to help bridge gaps in human rights implementation at the national and regional level. The Office maintains cooperative relations with countries where OHCHR has no presence such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Ghana. It enjoys a wide range of strategic partnerships with other UN agencies and funds and participates in the elaboration of programming documents adopting a human rights-based approach. Examples include national UNDAFs and the UN integrated strategy for Sahel. To fulfil its mandate, the Office cooperates closely with governments, NHRIs, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), civil society and bilateral and multilateral institutions and donors.

Thematic priorities

- ▶ Strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms with a focus on: ratifications; submissions of reports by States and submission of information by civil society actors, the NHRI and the United Nations to treaty bodies, special procedures and the UPR; and establishment of a national participatory body for reporting and implementing the recommendations of human rights mechanisms.
- ▶ Integrating human rights in development and the economic sphere with a focus on: integration of recommendations from human rights mechanisms and a human rights-based approach in United Nations work.
- ▶ Enhancing equality and countering discrimination with a focus on: legislation in conformity with non-discrimination and equality standards.
- ▶ Widening the democratic space with a focus on: participation in public life and NHRIs established

and/or working in compliance with international standards (Paris Principles).

- ▶ Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity with

a focus on: United Nations responsive to situations of violence and insecurity; and the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

OHCHR expected contribution

ALL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL IN WEST AFRICA	
RIGHTS-HOLDERS	DUTY-BEARERS
<p>[EA5] ▶ Increased participation of women in political life, specifically in Parliaments and local institutions in Benin and Senegal.</p>	<p>[EA1] ▶ A national human rights institution has been established and works in conformity with international standards in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal.</p>
	<p>[EA2] ▶ Benin ratifies ICMW; OP-ICESCR; and OP-CEDAW. ▶ Gambia ratifies ICMW; CAT; OP-ICESCR; OP-ICCPR-2; and OP-CEDAW. ▶ Cape Verde ratifies CPRD and its OP; OP-ICESCR; and OP-CAT. ▶ Senegal ratifies OP-ICESCR; OP-ICCPR-2; and OP-CRPD. ▶ Burkina Faso ratifies OP-ICESCR; and OP-ICCPR-2.</p>
	<p>[EA4] ▶ National laws have been harmonized with regional and international standards on non-discrimination and equality in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal. ▶ Judicial procedures are simplified to improve access to justice for discriminated groups (in particular migrants, persons with disabilities, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons) in Senegal.</p>
<p>[EA7] ▶ National human rights institutions and civil society organizations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal increasingly engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms.</p>	<p>[EA6] ▶ Fully functioning participatory standing national coordinating bodies are established for reporting/ replying to individual communications and enquiries; and integrated follow-up to recommendations of all human rights mechanisms; and an increased number of reports submitted by Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal.</p>
<p>[EA10] ▶ Timely response to human rights issues in the context of early warning efforts, mainly in relation to the Sahel crisis, by the Human Rights Council and ECOWAS.</p>	
<p>[EA11] ▶ UNDAF incorporates a human rights-based approach in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia and Senegal.</p>	

By 2017, OHCHR expects to have contributed to the achievement of the results outlined on the table above, in support of national efforts in the different thematic priority areas (colour scheme). OHCHR will pursue these behavioural, institutional and legislative changes in cooperation with relevant partners, using the different strategic tools at its disposal – monitoring and reporting, capacity-building and advisory services, advocacy and awareness-raising (see chapter one) – on the basis of an assessment of the specific context. It is expected that if achieved, these results will contribute to improving the duty-bearers' compliance with their international human rights obligations and to the rights-holders' ability to claim their rights and thereby to the enjoyment of all rights for all in the region.