

The ICRC's delegation to the African Union (AU) aims to achieve better understanding and wider acceptance of the ICRC within the AU Commission and other AU bodies. In its capacity as official observer to the AU, it works with member States to draw attention to problems requiring humanitarian action, to promote greater recognition and much wider implementation of IHL throughout Africa and to raise awareness of the ICRC's role and activities. It endeavours to build strong relations with AU-accredited intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and UN agencies.

KEY RESULTS/CONSTRAINTS

In 2013:

- ▶ the African Union (AU) adopted a set of standard procedures to ensure the humane treatment of persons detained by its Regional Task Force, while developing other normative frameworks for its peace-support missions
- ▶ the AU Commission and the ICRC provided member States with technical advice on incorporating provisions of the African Union Convention on IDPs in domestic legislation, following the treaty's entry into force in 2012
- ▶ representatives of member States endorsed a plan of action for tackling the obstacles to meeting clearance deadlines set by the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions
- ▶ following a meeting between the Peace and Security Council and the ICRC president, the AU called on parties to armed conflicts to fulfil their obligations under IHL, encouraging States to support the ICRC's humanitarian work

YEARLY RESULT

Level of achievement of ICRC yearly objectives/plans of action

HIGH

EXPENDITURE (in KCHF)

See Ethiopia

IMPLEMENTATION RATE

See Ethiopia

PERSONNEL

See Ethiopia

CONTEXT

The African Union (AU) continued to pursue efforts to resolve armed conflicts and other situations of violence in Africa, particularly in the Central African Republic (hereafter CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC), Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

The AU maintained peacekeeping forces in Somalia and, jointly with the UN, in Darfur, Sudan. Aided by the UN, the European Union and the United States of America, the AU-led Regional Task Force (AU RTF) endeavoured to counter the armed activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In Mali, the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which later became a UN-led peacekeeping mission. As part of the efforts to address the instability in the CAR, the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) transferred its authority to the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR).

During the 21st AU Summit, the AU adopted a resolution to establish an "African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises", a military force capable of rapid intervention in conflict situations on the continent.

ICRC ACTION AND RESULTS

To bolster protection and assistance for conflict-affected populations across Africa, the ICRC promoted the incorporation of IHL in the AU's decisions and policies and raised awareness of IHL and Movement activities among AU officials, representatives of member States and members of civil society in the region.

The AU and the ICRC worked together to incorporate IHL in the AU's normative frameworks for its peace-support operations. For example, the AU RTF adopted a set of detention procedures developed in consultation with an ICRC legal adviser seconded to the AU. While a set of detention guidelines for the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) remained pending, the ICRC continued to provide the AMISOM with technical advice on the treatment of armed group defectors and former combatants held in their custody. The AU drew on ICRC expertise in reviewing the rules of engagement of the AU RTF, AFISMA, AMISOM and AFISM-CAR to ensure that they conformed to IHL. In parallel, the ICRC reminded AU officials of the peace-support troops' responsibilities under IHL to respect those who are not/no longer taking part in the fighting and to facilitate their access to aid.

With the ICRC's technical guidance, the AU continued to foster broad implementation of IHL-related instruments. After the African Union Convention on IDPs entered into force in 2012, the AU Commission and the ICRC encouraged member States, at several workshops, to incorporate the treaty's provisions in domestic legislation. During meetings with State representatives, AU officials and humanitarian agencies, the ICRC underscored the need to reinforce domestic legal protection for women, children and victims of sexual violence during armed conflict. As anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continued to affect many people across Africa, the AU and the ICRC gathered experts from member States, donor States and various organizations to discuss the challenges of clearing mines/ERW and ways to overcome them.

Regular interaction with the AU contributed to increasing support for the ICRC's operations in countries contending with conflict or unrest. Through presentations and meetings, including a discussion between the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the ICRC president, the ICRC facilitated the exchange of information on evolving humanitarian situations and raised awareness of IHL and humanitarian concerns – including those covered by the Health Care in Danger project – among leaders of AU member States, AU bodies and other organizations, with a view to influencing decision-making in behalf of people affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

AU incorporates IHL in detention standards for peace-support missions

AU bodies, including the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD), worked with the ICRC to incorporate IHL in legal frameworks governing AU military/peacekeeping operations. AU experts reviewed – in consultation with an ICRC legal adviser seconded to the AU – the rules of engagement of the AU RTF, AMISOM, and AFISM-CAR to make sure that they conformed to IHL. The AU RTF adopted a set of detention standards, developed in 2012 with ICRC support, to help ensure the humane treatment of persons detained by its troops. Following the deployment of AFISMA, the AU and ECOWAS drew on ICRC expertise for drafting detention guidelines, including on the transfer of detainees to the Malian authorities. While the adoption of the AMISOM detention procedures remained pending, AU officials continued to receive legal advice, notably on AMISOM's treatment of defectors from armed groups and detained former combatants.

In parallel, specific representations were made to the AU regarding the obligations of peace-support troops, notably to foster respect for people not/no longer participating in hostilities and facilitate their access to health care.

To encourage long-term adherence to IHL in the planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations, the AU, with ICRC input, drafted policy documents on protecting civilians and on detention procedures related to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Senior mission leaders of the African Standby Force participated in an IHL course, while the PSOD, with advice from the ICRC, formulated guidelines for IHL training for trainers and AU peace-support troops. Reinforcing these efforts, AU officials developed their IHL expertise during a course in San Remo.

States receive guidance in implementing the AU Convention on IDPs and other IHL-related treaties

After the African Union Convention on IDPs entered into force in December 2012, the AU and the ICRC encouraged member States to incorporate the treaty's provisions in domestic legislation during workshops in Chad, Mauritania and Nigeria. Meetings with the Department of Political Affairs followed up on the development of a model law for implementing the treaty.

The AU and the ICRC discussed cooperation in promoting other IHL-related instruments, such as the Arms Trade Treaty. After an ICRC presentation on IHL promotion at the 36th conference of the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the APU included in the conference's resolution a commitment to adapting domestic laws to facilitate the implementation of IHL.

The AU Commission of International Law (AUCIL) increased its capacity to promote accession to/implementation of IHL instruments, as a result of its representatives' participation in regional IHL seminars (see *Nairobi* and *Pretoria*). The AUCIL and the Defense and Security Division had better access to IHL-related information following the ICRC's donation of publications and audiovisual materials.

AU and member States study measures to protect and assist children and victims of sexual violence

Representatives of member States, humanitarian agencies and other organizations examined the plight of children in armed conflict and their protection under IHL at seminars/presentations organized with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

During an AU-led open debate, an ICRC presentation underscored the need to accelerate implementation of existing instruments that would strengthen protection for women and children. Participants in these events learnt more about ICRC activities specifically addressing the needs of children, including those formerly associated with weapon bearers.

At an AU-organized meeting, member States and humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC, discussed measures to address the problem of sexual violence in armed conflict. ICRC recommendations underscored, *inter alia*, the need to facilitate victims' access to medical care and other assistance.

Government officials seek to overcome challenges in mine/ERW clearance

Many people across Africa continued to contend with the effects of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and ERW from past and current conflicts. At a workshop organized by the AU and the ICRC, experts from 23 member States, donor States and various organizations tackled challenges in meeting clearance deadlines set by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Participants from States Parties that had already fulfilled their clearance obligations described how they had overcome such constraints as lack of resources and training. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants endorsed the AU Commission's proposed three-year work plan (covering 2013–15).

Officials from member States and representatives of international organizations learnt more about the Movement's activities in behalf of people suffering the consequences of weapon contamination, including persons with disabilities, through ICRC presentations and an exhibit at the AU's headquarters.

AU calls on parties to conflicts to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches people in need

The AU frequently included IHL-related concerns in its resolutions and public communication, which the ICRC encouraged at regular meetings with representatives of bodies such as the PSC, the Panel of the Wise and the AU Partners Group, and at events such as the 20th and 21st Ordinary Sessions of the AU Assembly. Dialogue with ambassadors to the AU sought to boost acceptance for the Movement's neutral, impartial and independent activities in countries affected by conflict or unrest (see *Context*).

After a dialogue with the ICRC president, the PSC issued a press statement calling on all parties involved in armed conflicts to

fulfill their responsibilities under IHL, deploring attacks against humanitarian workers, and encouraging member States to support the ICRC's work in behalf of conflict-affected people. Moreover, during an AU/ICRC-organized Health Care in Danger exhibition, some 3,000 people learnt more about the need to safeguard the provision of health care in situations of conflict/violence.

Interaction with NGOs and think-tanks working with the AU enhanced mutual understanding of working methods to ensure effective coordination of humanitarian activities. This interaction took the form of round-tables and international conferences, such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development and seminars organized by the Institute of Security Studies on peace and security issues in Africa.

Academics and members of civil society accessed IHL-related reference materials for research at the ICRC documentation centre in Addis Ababa.