

REPORT

REPORT OF THE 19TH ECOWAS-ICRC ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL) IN WEST AFRICA

12 – 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 - ABUJA, NIGERIA



ICRC

REPORT

**REPORT OF THE 19TH
ECOWAS-ICRC ANNUAL
REVIEW MEETING ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)
IN WEST AFRICA**

12 – 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 - ABUJA, NIGERIA

CONTENTS

I. Background to the collaboration between the ICRC and ECOWAS	4
II. Objectives of the 19th Annual Meeting, Theme and Participants	6
III. Opening Ceremony	7
IV. Reports of States on the Implementation of IHL (Reporting Session)	8
V. Preventing and Responding to Internal Displacement in West Africa (Thematic Session)	14
VI. ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on IHL (2019–2023): assessment and outlook	18
VII. ECOWAS contribution to the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent	19
VIII. Conclusions and recommendations	20
Appendix I – Meeting Program	21
Appendix II – List of Participants	24
Annex III – Recommendations adopted at the 19th Annual Meeting	27

I. BACKGROUND TO THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ICRC AND ECOWAS

Over the years, citizens of ECOWAS member States have been affected by the multifaceted humanitarian consequences of armed conflict and other situations of violence. International humanitarian law (IHL) provides better protection for victims of armed conflict and affected populations. The rules of IHL are mainly codified in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977. They aim to limit the humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts, by ensuring that persons who are not or are no longer taking part in hostilities are protected and treated humanely, and by restricting the means and methods of warfare that may be used by parties to a conflict.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian organisation, has received a mandate from the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 to promote respect for IHL. In West Africa, the ICRC has been working closely with the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for more than two decades on the promotion of IHL treaties and their effective implementation in member states. The implementation of IHL consists of integrating the provisions of IHL into national legal and institutional frameworks and adopting all necessary measures to create an environment conducive to compliance with IHL. The collaboration between the ICRC and the ECOWAS Commission aims to support ECOWAS Member States in their implementation efforts, but also to encourage the integration of IHL into regional policies and practices.

The collaboration between the ICRC and ECOWAS, formalized in February 2001 by a first Memorandum of Understanding, has been strengthened and developed, leading to the conclusion of a second Memorandum of Understanding in August 2023. This partnership has led to the adoption of Regional Action Plan (2019–2023) for the implementation of IHL in West Africa by ECOWAS and its member States.¹ In 2019, ECOWAS Member States decided to promote IHL to the international community by submitting a commitment to this effect, within the framework of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.²

One of the flagship activities of this partnership is the ECOWAS-ICRC annual meeting on the implementation of IHL in West Africa, which is in its 19th edition in 2023. This annual IHL review meeting brings together experts from ECOWAS Member States, from the main Ministries, bodies or institutions involved in the implementation of IHL at the national level, namely the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and Defence – which are also members of the National IHL Commissions, in the countries where they exist. This meeting provides opportunity to promote key IHL treaties and provide technical support for their implementation within ECOWAS Member States. It also serves as a platform for participants and experts from ECOWAS Member States to network and exchange views and experiences on contemporary IHL issues of concern, and humanitarian challenges in region in relation to ECOWAS IHL plan of Action.

The fundamental objective of the ICRC-ECOWAS Annual Meetings on the Implementation of IHL is to contribute to ensuring compliance with the relevant rules and legal instruments of IHL and to promote their integration into national mechanisms through the adoption of concrete measures by Member States. They also aim to promote the ratification of IHL treaties in the region, take stock of their implementation, identify gaps in this area, set priorities and exchange good practices that can strengthen national implementation of

¹ ECOWAS Action Plan on IHL 2019–2023, Annex I, 2018 Report on the Implementation of IHL in West Africa, p. 66.

² Available on <https://icrcconference.org/fr/pledge/mise-en-oeuvre-transposition-dans-les-lois-nationales-et-diffusion-du-droit-international-humanitaire-dih-en-afrique-de-louest/>

IHL in response to contemporary humanitarian challenges in the region. The annual ICRC-ECOWAS meetings also make it possible to strengthen the technical capacities of certain actors of influence in member states, including on specific themes chosen for each of these meetings. This combination of technical assistance and peer review helps to ensure that IHL is respected and integrated into legislation and practical measures adopted by Member States.

In addition to its collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, the ICRC also works closely with ECOWAS member states at the national level to provide them with technical support for the dissemination of IHL and the transposition and integration of IHL into member states' legislation. In addition to this work, the ICRC's operational activities, particularly in the area of assistance and protection, are carried out.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE 19TH ANNUAL MEETING, THEME AND PARTICIPANTS

The 19th Annual ECOWAS-ICRC Review Meeting on the Implementation of IHL in West Africa was held from 12 to 14 September 2023 at the headquarters of the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, Nigeria (see Programme and List of Participants – Annexes I and II).

The specific objectives of this meeting were to:

- Take stock of the progress made in 2022 and 2023 in the implementation of the ECOWAS Action Plan on IHL (2019–2023) and the related commitment made by ECOWAS Member States at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent;
- Present the priorities of the Member States for the year 2024;
- Strengthen collaboration between ECOWAS and the ICRC in the implementation of IHL in Member States;
- Strengthen the technical capacities of Member States and facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges on the implementation of IHL in general as well as on the theme of the 19th meeting, namely “Prevention and Response to Internal Displacement in West Africa”.

Internal displacement is indeed a major humanitarian concern in West Africa. In 2023, it was estimated that there were about 8.3 million internally displaced people in West and Central Africa, including about 2.9 million in the Sahel region. Internal displacement disrupts people’s lives and puts communities at risk. It has repercussions on entire countries, generating serious humanitarian, social and economic problems. In 2009, the African continent adopted a pioneering instrument to prevent and respond to the challenges of internal displacement: *the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention*. As of September 2023, eleven of the fifteen ECOWAS Member States were parties to the Kampala Convention. However, this Convention can only achieve its full potential if it is effectively implemented and operationalized by States. The 19th annual ICRC-ECOWAS meeting was dedicated to the theme of preventing and responding to internal displacement, with a view to encouraging and providing technical advice to Member States for the effective implementation of this Convention.

During this 19th annual meeting, it was also a question of deciding on the future of the ECOWAS regional action plan – namely its renewal or extension and, if necessary, the duration of such an extension – as well as the modalities of the report on the implementation of the ECOWAS commitment to the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to be submitted to the 34th International Conference scheduled for October 2024.

Twelve (12) Member States were represented at this 19th annual meeting – namely **Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo**. The participating experts from these States were appointed in their capacity as members of the National IHL Commission, or as representatives of the Ministry of Justice or Ministry of Foreign Affairs involved in the implementation of IHL. **Experts from** ECOWAS, the ICRC, the African Union, the United Nations, observer States and civil society organizations also contributed to the exchanges.

For the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the end of the meeting, see Annex III.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

The 19th annual ICRC-ECOWAS meeting was opened by speeches by the ICRC Head of Delegation in Abuja, Mr. Yann BONZON and Dr. Fatou Sow SARR, Commissioner for Human Development and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission.

In his speech, Mr. Yann Bonzon welcomed the participants to this 19th annual meeting, before praising the collaboration between the ICRC and ECOWAS and the progress it has made in the implementation of IHL. In particular, he commended the leadership shown by ECOWAS Member States in deciding to adopt a regional action plan to guide progress in the implementation of IHL and, for their formal commitment to strengthen the implementation and dissemination of IHL taken in 2019, at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The ICRC head of delegation said that “the national implementation of international humanitarian law in West Africa is a matter of urgency”, stressing that “millions of people in the region suffer the disastrous humanitarian consequences of armed conflict and other situations of violence”, while many of them suffer through attacks on their lives or dignity, internal displacement, detention, sexual and child abuse, limited access to health care and essential services, and food security issues.

With regard to the theme of the annual meeting – preventing and responding to internal displacement – the Head of Delegation encouraged participating States to strengthen efforts to implement the Kampala Convention. This groundbreaking Convention, he said, “can only achieve its full potential if it is effectively implemented and operationalized by States.”

The ICRC Head of Delegation concluded his remarks by expressing his gratitude to the ECOWAS Commission for its commitment to improving respect for IHL, and said that the presence of participants at this annual meeting testified to their States’ continued commitment to upholding humanitarian law and principles.

Prof. Fatou Sow SARR welcomed the participants and thanked them for their interest in the annual meeting on the implementation of IHL by ECOWAS Member States. She then conveyed to the participants the congratulations of the President of the ECOWAS Commission for their involvement in the effective implementation of IHL in their respective States. The Commissioner for Human Development and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission made it clear that the promotion of IHL is an essential part of the objectives set by ECOWAS for collective peace, security and the promotion of peoples’ rights. It also took note of the adoption of the 1st Plan of Action (2012–2017 extended until 2018) and committed to follow up on the second Plan of Action, which should define specific thematic areas of importance, including the fight against torture, the protection of children, migrants, displaced persons, sexual assault in South Africa, the proliferation of weapons.

In addition, as this 19th annual meeting is being held in the run-up to the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Dr. Fatou Sow SARR recommended that this annual meeting provide an opportunity to review the progress made in the achievement of the commitment made by ECOWAS at the 33rd International Conference. The ECOWAS representative concluded her remarks by urging participants to reflect on where they are and where they would like to go, reiterating the need to improve security and protection in the ECOWAS region.

IV. REPORTS OF STATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IHL (REPORTING SESSION)

As usual, the annual meeting began with a debriefing session, which provided an opportunity to take stock of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the ECOWAS Action Plan on IHL since the last review meeting (March 2022), as well as to share national IHL priorities for the year 2024. Prior to the meeting, a questionnaire had been distributed to Member States in order to prepare for the discussions during this session.

This year, this reporting session was structured in 3 segments: 1) participation in IHL treaties; 2) the implementation of IHL; and (3) the activities of national IHL commissions. This structure greatly facilitated thematic discussions and the sharing of good practices in these three areas.

Regarding the segment on participation in IHL treaties, the reports recalled that the state of participation in IHL treaties within the ECOWAS region is relatively high, with several Member States having ratified almost all IHL treaties. Some States have made concrete progress towards the ratification of additional treaties (such as Guinea, concerning the Kampala Convention). Among the treaties that are part of the priorities of Member States for ratification for the year 2024, the following were mentioned: Additional Protocol III of 2005 to the Geneva Conventions, Hague Protocols I and II for the Protection of Cultural Property, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Other States have expressed interest in considering ratification of certain treaties (such as the Convention on Environmental Modification Techniques (ENMOD), or the Kampala Convention). Institutional innovations to encourage and facilitate the ratification of new treaties are also envisaged, such as in Senegal, which has initiated the installation of a structure responsible for monitoring the ratification and implementation of AU and ECOWAS treaties, including those relating to IHL. For the detailed report shared by the Member States as well as their 2024 priorities, see Tables 1 and 2 below.

The segment on participation in IHL treaties was complemented by a presentation by Ms. Pelagie Manzan Dékou dedicated to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – the last treaty adopted on IHL, in 2017. Considering the humanitarian consequences that these weapons are likely to cause, Ms. Dékou said that “it is extremely unlikely, according to the ICRC, that their use could ever be in accordance with the principles and rules of IHL”. Pending the elimination of nuclear weapons, it is therefore urgent and imperative to take risk reduction and non-proliferation measures to prevent their use, and to accede to the TPNW. The treaty is the first multilateral agreement to establish a comprehensive set of global prohibitions on nuclear weapons and to help address the humanitarian consequences of the use and testing of nuclear weapons. The discussion session that followed the presentation made it possible to clarify the current state of ratification of the TPNW on the African continent and beyond, the scope of the TPNW’s provisions, and its complementarity with other international agreements on nuclear weapons, and regional agreements on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (such as the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, or Treaty of Pelindaba).

In terms of IHL implementation, the segment provided an opportunity for participants to report on progress made between 2022–2023. Thus, some National Commissions on IHL (CNDIH), such as that of Burkina Faso, have reported a particularly rich record over the period concerned, citing for example the organization of training and sessions to disseminate IHL to various audiences, the carrying out of studies on the compatibility of the national legal framework with IHL and IHRL on specific themes, the maintenance of consultation frameworks between national actors concerned by the implementation of IHL, etc. Some States were able to report on the adoption of new laws contributing to the integration of IHL (such as Mali having adopted in July

2022 a law on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, which includes the protection of heritage in the context of armed conflicts) while other States indicated that legislative reforms were underway – notably on the circulation of arms, the protection of cultural property, the protection of internally displaced persons, the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblem, the repression of war crimes, sexual violence and the protection of children – some of which were in the process of being finalised at the time of the meeting (such as the adoption of a law on the emblem in Côte d’Ivoire). Other implementing measures were cited, including those relating to the protection of children associated with armed forces and groups. Several States expressed their gratitude to the ICRC for the technical and/or material support provided during the period in question.

In terms of priorities for the year 2024, several States have expressed their ambition to pursue and carry out the ongoing legislative reforms in order to better integrate IHL into the national legal framework, to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of IHL, to carry out activities to promote IHL among various stakeholders (government actors, academics, parliamentarians, armed forces, etc.). For the detailed report shared by the Member States as well as their 2024 priorities, see Tables 1 and 2 below.

The segment on the implementation of IHL was complemented by a presentation on the resources (old and new) that the ICRC makes available to States to support them in the work of implementing IHL – such as: General resources for all actors; Key resources for government officials; Key resources for parliamentarians; Key resources for use by National IHL Committees; Key resources for judges and lawyers; Key resources for the use of the armed forces and military personnel; Key resources for media use; Key resources for health workers; Key resources for use by academia; Key resources for civil society; Key resources for youth and children; Key resources for National Societies.

During the segment dedicated to **the IHRCs**,³ several NHICs reported on their activities in support of the implementation of IHL in 2022–2023 (such as the IHNCs of Burkina Faso or Côte d’Ivoire). The CNDIH of Côte d’Ivoire has consolidated its reactivation, materialized by the adoption of a decree reforming its structure and composition. It also mentioned capacity building for its members and several activities, including a training workshop for members of the diplomatic corps. In Cape Verde, the authorities are also reflecting on the structure and mandate of the CNDIH. The active NHICs in the region also shared some of the challenges they face (lack of funding, difficulties in bringing together its members on a regular basis, recurrent changes of representatives of member ministries, etc.). While some Member States managed to reactivate their CNDIH during the period covered (such as Nigeria, whose CNDIH was reactivated in 2023), others shared their ambition to do the same (Benin, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo) or to create such a Commission (Mali).

The discussion session allowed participants to share good practices (in particular on the optimal profile of CNDIH members, which allows a balance between technical competence, availability and decision-making power; or on the duration of their mandate), to exchange on how to address certain challenges (e.g. relating to the mobility of CNDIH members), as well as clarifying issues such as the difference between a National IHL Commission and a National Human Rights Commission (or Committee).

The segment on the CNDIH concluded with a presentation by Mr Sechie PHILIP, ICRC Legal Adviser in Abuja, on some of the ICRC’s recommendations for the functioning of the CNDIH, taken from the publication *Commissions and Other National Bodies of International Humanitarian Law: Guidelines for a Successful Mission*.⁴

Table 1 below summarises the implementation developments reported by the twelve (12) Member States participating in the 19th meeting since March 2022 (date of the 18th meeting) and up to September 2023 (date of the 19th meeting). Table 2 below summarises the priorities announced for the year 2024.

3 National IHL Commissions are inter-ministerial (sometimes inter-institutional) bodies whose task is to advise and assist the government in the implementation and dissemination of IHL. For more information, see: <https://www.icrc.org/fr/guerre-et-droit/droit-national-et-dih/commissions-nationales>

4 ICRC, *Commissions and other national bodies of international humanitarian law: guidelines for a successful mission*, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/fr/document/les-commissions-et-autres-instances-nationales-de-droit-international-humanitaire-lignes>

TABLE 1: STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL IHL PRIORITIES SET FOR 2021

IVORY COAST	BURKINA FASO	GHANA	MALI	NIGER	NIGERIA	SENEGAL
1. The National Committee on IHL developed a 12-point national action plan for the implementation of IHL. 2. Decree No. 2023-606 of 15 June 2023 on the creation, attribution and functioning of the National Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law 3. Adoption by the Council of Ministers of a draft law on the protection of emblems	1. Training on the protection of children in two military regions (for SDF) 2. Training session of 90 SDS on civilian population in 3 military regions 3. Healthcare Compatibility Study ("Completed Study") 4. Maintaining a framework for consultation between the different actors of the IHL MEON 5. Roundtable on the issue of humanitarian access 6. Training sessions for VDPs (auxiliaries to the SDF) on the respect of DH and IHL in the fight against terrorism 7. Awareness-raising session on the dangers of IEDs and dangers related to small arms and light weapons.	1. Several actions carried out for internally displaced persons and refugees 2. IHL dissemination and training at the Kofi Annan Centre	1. Adoption of a law of 28 July 2022 on the protection of cultural heritage, implementing AP II to the 1954 Convention. 2. Continuation of work on the reform of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. 3. Inter-ministerial meeting held on 1 August 2023. Next steps: adoption by the Council of Ministers, then by the transitional council before the end of 2023. 4. Integration of IHL into SDS training	1. Adoption of a law on weapons (priority 2022) 2. Ongoing process to implement three conventions: ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Arms Trade Treaty, Palermo Convention. 3. In the process of being adopted by the Council of Ministers 3. Protection of missing persons: compatibility study carried out which led to a reflection on the adoption of a law on missing persons	1. Ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions 2. Reactivation of the CNDH which includes the Ministries and Universities 3. Counter-terrorism training by the Human Rights Office in the military 4. Rights of the child protected in armed and non-armed conflict 5. Good treatment and impartial trial of suspects in the Boko Haram case 6. Development of a Civil-Military Cooperation Manual	1. Reform of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure for the integration of war crimes and cooperation with the ICC; 1st country to ratify the Rome Statute 2. The Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons Act, 2022, establishing a National Commission for Refugees and Stateless Persons containing provisions on judicial protection, family reunification, prohibition of refoulement 3. Reform of the Labour Code taking into account a definition of migrants, which prohibits discrimination against a person on the basis of his or her origin 4. Observatory against torture set up in 2012... 5. Judicial Training Centre: for magistrates and lawyers

CAPE VERDE	GUINEA	LIBERIA	SIERRA LEONE	TOGO
1. Amendments to the Weapons Act to address the challenges of small arms and light weapons and end urban violence 2. Laws to be adopted on emblem, child abuse, sexual violence 3. Meeting with the SDF and the Red Cross to align IHL strategies 4. Criminal Code: integration of international crimes such as genocide, war crimes	1. Implementation of several texts through the revision of the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure 2. Jurisdiction of the courts to hold trials on mass crimes 3. Draft ratification of the Kampala Convention on the desk of the National Assembly since 2019 and before the NTC in 2023	1. Ratification of all relevant IHL instruments 2. Implementation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as the Cultural Property Convention 3. Amendment of a law to extend its scope to IDPs	1. Ratification of relevant IHL conventions 2. Working with the government on all ratified treaties that need to be implemented 3. Commission for Social Action, which supervises the actions of internally displaced persons and refugees	1. Adoption of the Code of Criminal Procedure in accordance with the new Criminal Code (Law No. 2015-10 of 24 November 2015) (postponed from 2018): process still ongoing 2. IHL National Action Plan not adopted, but the country is drawing inspiration from the Regional Action Plan with a view to making progress in certain areas, such as the fight against terrorism or the circulation of arms (a UNIDIR and ECOWAS mission assessed the circulation of arms and ammunition in Togo, with a view to establishing a national framework governing the management of arms and ammunition in accordance with international commitments). 3. Adoption of the Sexual Violence Act 2022 4. Adoption in the Council of Ministers on May 30, 2022, of the Code of Criminal Procedure, currently on the desk of the Law Committee of the National Assembly 5. Penal Code Amendment Act 2022 that punishes rape 6. Ongoing review of the Criminal Code 7. Fight against terrorism: Koundjoaré operation on the northern Togo/Burkina border – restructuring and reinforcement of personnel 8. Sub-Committees created by the TC Committee within the departments to denounce any act of terrorism 9. With the Small Arms Commission: seizure and destruction of weapons, as well as regularizations 10. Revised National Child Welfare Policy 11. Consideration of the 5th and 6th periodic reports pending in Geneva before the Human Rights Committee

TABLE 2: NATIONAL IHL PRIORITIES SET FOR 2024

BENIN	CAPE VERDE	IVORY COAST	GHANA	GUINEA
1. Reactivate the National Committee on IHL and train its members 2. Establish a three-year national action plan for the implementation of IHL 3. Organize a workshop on the dissemination and implementation of IHL for government officials and academics. 4. Publish a compilation of all IHL treaties	1. Adoption of an IHL Implementation Action Plan 2. Ratification of the 1954 Hague Convention on Cultural Property and its Protocols 3. Dissemination of IHL in Universities 4. Adoption of an emblem law 5. Drafting of a law on small arms and light weapons.	1. Ratification of Protocol III of 2005 to the Geneva Conventions 2. Ratification of Protocols I and II to the Hague Convention relative to the Protection of Cultural Property in Time of Armed Conflict. 3. Adoption of a draft order on the functioning of the permanent secretariat of the CNDIH 4. Analysis of the legal and institutional framework applicable to IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire.	1. Ratification of the Kampala Convention 2. Reactivation of the CNDIH	1. Ratification of the Kampala Convention 2. Establishment of a CNDIH 3. Integration of IHL in military training centres, police and gendarmeries

LIBERIA	NIGERIA	SENEGAL	SIERRA LEONE	TOGO
1. Adoption of legislation implementing the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols 2. Revision of the status of the Commission in charge of refugees to extend its competence to the protection of IDPs 3. Reactivation of the CNDIH	1. Implementation of the Kampala Convention	1. Revitalize the IHL Committee, strengthen the capacities of its members and develop a 2024 action plan	1. Implementation of the Rome Statute and the Kampala Convention 2. Ratification of the TPNW	1. Adoption of the revised Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure

The reporting session was also marked by briefings by ECOWAS and the ICRC.

For ECOWAS, Olatunde Olayemi, Programme Officer in the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, presented the Directorate's mandate, the activities carried out and the prospects for the future. He presented the main ECOWAS standard-setting instruments related to IHL and the protection of civilians and touching on different themes (*security of civilian populations, humanitarian policy, trafficking in persons, children's rights, protection of refugees and displaced persons*) with emphasis on Article 58 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty. From a structural point of view, the directorate has a human security division that is responsible for addressing various issues related to the challenges of fragility with a view to the resilience of populations. As a result, several protection policies and human security programmes are put in place to better take into account humanitarian concerns. However, there is a need for both internal and regional coordination for the effectiveness of this division. In each member state, a mechanism composed of representatives of relevant ministries, civil society, the media and the private sector to institutionalize and conduct a governmental and social approach is put in place to ensure the human security of the individual. The main challenges of this mechanism are expressed in terms of promoting IHL and human rights, encouraging States to promote the protection of individuals, the protection of children's rights. On this basis, a 2012-2019-2023 action plan was adopted, taking into account the problems of migrants, child trafficking, etc. The role of the mechanisms is to promote system-wide improvement in promoting human protection and security and a governmental/state and societal approach with a focus on system-wide coordination, standardization and cooperation, serve as a platform for learning, coordination and capacity building, engage in advocacy with the state, social mobilization with the population, and mobilization of resources for actions to end protection violations. ECOWAS has several programmes for the promotion and protection of IHL and human rights. However, the institution continues to face several challenges related to the existence of several situations of NIAC and VSOs in the ECOWAS region and the need to revitalize national commissions for the implementation of IHL. ECOWAS must continue intensive work in the field of the promotion and implementation of international humanitarian law for the benefit of the people

For the ICRC, Ms. Elvina Pothelet, Regional Legal Adviser for West Africa, briefed the participants on some recent developments in the field of IHL⁵ This briefing was an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of Resolution 2664 adopted by the United Nations Security Council in December 2022: this historic and legally binding resolution exempts humanitarian activities from all financial prohibitions, present and future, established by the United Nations sanctions regimes. In other words, this resolution helps to reconcile UN sanctions regimes with key obligations under IHL, including those governing humanitarian activities, and should therefore be beneficial to humanitarian action worldwide, including in West Africa. Among other recent developments, particularly those relating to the protection of children in armed conflict, the ICRC highlighted some progress in favour of children associated with armed groups, who must be recognized first and foremost as victims (in particular the conclusion of protocols for the transfer of these children to civilian child protection actors by several ECOWAS member States). Finally, with regard to developments in the means and methods of warfare, it was noted that in November 2022 the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences of the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (Dublin Declaration) was noted. ECOWAS Member States were encouraged to endorse the Declaration (already endorsed by more than 80 States as of the date of the meeting).

⁵ Presentation given on the 3rd day.

V. PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN WEST AFRICA (THEMATIC SESSION)

The 2nd day was dedicated to the theme chosen for this 19th annual meeting, namely the prevention and response to internal displacement in West Africa. In 2023, an estimated 8.3 million people were internally displaced in West and Central Africa, including an estimated 2.9 million in the Sahel region. The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention, is a pioneering and essential instrument for addressing the major humanitarian challenges posed by internal displacement and providing meaningful assistance and protection to internally displaced persons. At the time of the meeting, 33 States were parties to the Convention. But the Kampala Convention can only achieve its full potential if it is effectively implemented and operationalized by States. States must redouble their efforts to ensure that national laws, regulations and policies are adopted in order to integrate its provisions into national frameworks.

Thus, the thematic session of this 19th annual meeting aimed to draw the attention of ECOWAS Member States to a number of issues affecting displaced persons, to share good practices in terms of protection and assistance, to encourage greater participation in the Kampala Convention and to guide and support efforts to implement the Kampala Convention. The thematic session was enriched by contributions from several Member States as well as experts from the African Union, the United Nations, IDMC, ECOWAS, ICRC and other organizations.

The discussions were very dense and interactive, confirming the concerns of the States of the sub-region on this subject, and their interest in benefiting from practical advice to address the challenges related to the prevention and response to internal displacement.

On the Kampala Convention and its ratification: Member States and experts recalled that the Kampala Convention is a pioneering regional instrument that ensures meaningful protection and assistance to internally displaced persons. Guinea and Ghana have included the ratification of the Kampala Convention in their 2024 priorities. Cape Verde and Senegal have expressed interest.

On its implementation: it was recalled that the Kampala Convention can only achieve its full potential if it is effectively implemented and operationalized by States. To date, Niger is the only ECOWAS Member State to have adopted a law to transpose the Convention, but other Member States (such as Nigeria, Mali or Burkina Faso) have taken steps to transpose the Kampala Convention into their national legal frameworks. Mali and Burkina Faso reaffirmed their commitment to complete the processes for the adoption of laws on internally displaced populations (IDPs)

The session on **“Preventing and Responding to Internal Displacement in West Africa”** was organized around six (6) panels on specific sub-themes: Internal Displacement and Humanitarian Consequences: A Regional Overview (Panel 1); Contemporary Challenges Related to Internal Displacement in West Africa (Panel 2); Improving Protection and Assistance to IDPs (Panel 3); The Kampala Convention: a single roadmap to prevent and respond to displacement (Panel 4); national implementation of the Kampala Convention: challenges and recommendations (Panel 5); the right to action: practical measures to make the Kampala Convention effective (Panel 7). See the program for details on moderators and panelists.

On **Internal Displacement and Humanitarian Consequences: A Regional Overview**, panelists highlighted the growing number of internally displaced people in Africa, including refugees who may then become internally displaced or even at risk of statelessness. The countries most affected by this phenomenon are Burkina Faso with 1,800,000 IDPs in 2022, followed by Niger and Chad.

The causes of displacement are multiple, namely armed conflicts, armed groups, inter-community conflicts, ethnic and community violence, human rights violations, natural disasters, climatic problems (desertification, drought, erosion), insufficient pasture, difficulty of access to water, floods, competition for scarce resources, violent attacks, lack of employment, etc. adverse economic factors and food insecurity.

These causes have many consequences for protection and security, including an increased vulnerability of internally displaced persons to recruitment by armed groups. They also suffer from a lack of access to clean water, health care and education, which exacerbates their precariousness. These difficulties have significant psychological impacts, compromise their economic empowerment and their ability to ensure their survival. They also highlight the need to cover basic needs and highlight the lack of access to critical infrastructure.

Governments and humanitarian organizations are stepping up their efforts to provide essential assistance to displaced people and identify durable solutions. These initiatives include actions coordinated by the civil protection services, which are implementing various emergency programmes in the Sahel region with the support of technical and financial partners. These interventions include the renovation of schools to promote the schooling of displaced children, the reassignment of teachers, as well as the renovation and strengthening of health centres, accompanied by psychological care. Other measures include the distribution of food and non-food aid, massive awareness campaigns on social cohesion and gender-based violence, the establishment of listening centres by the Ministry of Social Action and houses of justice, as well as free health care for internally displaced people.

These actions must continue and be strengthened with a view to the implementation of the Kampala Convention, the coordination and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and the search for durable solutions to the resolution of conflicts for the return of refugees and the development of a framework that promotes peace and development and encourages collaboration to solve humanitarian problems

On the sub-theme of **Contemporary Challenges Related to Internal Displacement in West Africa**, the participants referred to the recurrent armed violence against the Security and Defence Forces (SDF) and civilian populations, attacks on strategic places, kidnapping of state agents leading to a deterioration of the security climate and the massive displacement of populations. Another challenge is the urban nature of internal displacement, which complicates the management and coordination of interventions. Participants also stressed the difficulty of linking government security actions with humanitarian activities, which must remain impartial, neutral and independent. In addition, there is the problem of the loss of documentation of internally displaced populations, which can be a major obstacle to access to essential services such as education or land acquisition. Faced with these challenges, the speakers recommended the establishment of short-term procedures to facilitate access to education, considered a pillar of durable solutions. They also proposed measures to replace lost official documents and remove legal and administrative barriers, in order to ensure IDPs' access to basic rights and services.

The panel on “ **Improving Protection and Assistance to IDPs**” highlighted the challenges and opportunities of collecting data on internally displaced persons in ECOWAS, in order to predict risks and plan durable solutions. According to her, the number of IDPs continues to increase due to the existence of armed conflicts and natural disasters. A challenge is the collection of information on other disasters (drought, erosion, etc.) that take place over long periods of time, climate change, the lack of information on evacuations and events, and the need for early warning mechanisms before displacement. In addition, specific vulnerabilities require special attention, including sexual violence in the camps, facilitated by the lack of lighting at night, attacks on IDP sites, the risk of aid hoarding, as well as issues related to protracted displacement or pre-displacement phases. In this regard, it is important to move towards durable solutions that can facilitate the relocation of

IDPs to another part of the country. The ICRC recommends an integrated approach that ensures that IDPs are settled in decent conditions and that their needs are comprehensively addressed.

The panel on “**The Kampala Convention: A Single Roadmap to Prevent and Respond to Displacement**”

The panel served as a reminder that the Kampala Convention aims to protect IDPs from discrimination, human rights violations and other abuses. It is based on several key principles of protection, including documentation, finding short-term solutions in consultation with displaced people and in connection with host communities. Compensation for the losses suffered by internally displaced persons can be a solution, as can reparation, which remains a crucial issue, especially for victims of sexual violence. Mwihaki Kinyanjui, Senior Protection Specialist at UNHCR Office, said that the “centrality of protection” requires that the protection of IDPs be prioritized in any humanitarian response. A key issue to be addressed is the impact of crises on affected populations. For example, during armed conflicts, civilians need specific protections. It is therefore crucial to adapt the humanitarian response and ensure systematic participation of affected populations.

It is also necessary to pay attention to the specific needs of women, girls, persons with disabilities and children, who are often excluded from protection actions. Supporting operational leadership and strengthening the coordination structure are also priorities. Finally, it is essential to preserve humanitarian space, ensuring access to the places where IDPs are located.

On the **national implementation of the Kampala Convention: challenges and recommendations**, the subject of panel 5, Professor Chaloka Beyani, Associate Professor of International Law at the Department of Law of the London School of Economics (LSE), AU expert presented the AU Model Law adopted by the AU Heads of State. He recalled that the protection of the population is the responsibility of the State through the adoption of laws. Professor Beyani stressed the importance of establishing protection focal points and regulating the situation of IDPs in national legislation. Although the law is usually drafted by a ministry, it is essential to establish inter-ministerial coordination to develop such legislation, involving civil society, members of Parliament, as well as international organizations (IOs), the ICRC, the IOM and UN representatives. The United Nations Resident Coordinator could also play a facilitating role in this process. A key step is to designate a focal point for the coordination mechanism, which could be the prime minister, vice president, or president. Professor Beyani also stressed the importance of setting up a committee of experts after the awareness-raising seminar and a workshop to validate the draft law. Once the project has been validated, it must be submitted to the government, in particular to the ministry in charge of internally displaced persons (humanitarian affairs, peace, interior), then transmitted to the cabinet of the said ministry for exchanges, before being transferred to the Ministry of Justice for final adoption.

Mr. Hamid MAHAMAT, Coordinator and Protection Officer, National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees (CNARR), Chad, shared CNARR’s experience in the process of adopting an IDP law in Chad – a process that was completed on 1 April 2023. It was a long-term process involving all stakeholders: IOs, national organisations, the State, civil society. The law serves as a compass, from prevention to protection. In terms of good practices, Chad was inspired by the law of Niger. The main pillars: prevention, protection and durable solutions. It is now a question of popularizing the law, ensuring the coordination mechanism through the commission that has been managing IDP sites for several years, with the issue of biometric registration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which is attracting the attention of the government of Chad.

Dr. Patrick Etta Oyong, Director of the Legal Drafting Department at the Federal Ministry of Justice of Nigeria, said that although Nigeria has ratified the Kampala Convention, it has not yet “domesticated” it to give it the force of law, as required by the country’s Constitution. He stressed that the AU Model Law serves as a reference for States Parties. The creation of this legislation requires collaboration between the various actors and stakeholders. Nigeria has shown clear political will by adopting a policy that includes strategies to provide durable solutions for IDPs. The National Commission for Refugees and IDPs, in collaboration with UNHCR and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, launched the process of “domestication” of the Kampala Convention, with a retreat held in Lagos from 6 to 7 April 2022. At the event, a presentation was made

on the procedures needed to incorporate the Convention into Nigerian law. Ms. Tongret Shallom GOWON, Legal Adviser at ICRC-Abuja, encouraged States to draw inspiration from other countries' laws in this area, stressing the importance of sharing resources and examples. She recommended the use of the MEON database, which offers examples of legislation from other countries, as well as publications developed by the ICRC, such as those explaining how to translate the Kampala Convention into concrete actions.

At the opening of panel 7 on the theme “**From the right to action: practical measures to make the Kampala Convention effective**”, Ms. Paula GAVIRIA BETANCUR, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons, congratulated the ECOWAS States for their commitment to the implementation of the Kampala Convention, resulting in the ratification of the Kampala Convention. Kampala by two-thirds (2/3) of the states. She encouraged States to take steps to find effective solutions with the participation of IDPs who must be consulted, including in mediation and peace processes. Following him, Mr. Rasmane CONGO, Foreign Affairs Advisor, Directorate of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Burkina Faso, shared the experience of taking care of internally displaced persons through the example of CONASUR. This body, established in response to humanitarian crises, is attached to the Ministry of Social and Humanitarian Affairs and is responsible for coordinating activities in favour of IDPs. It implements the State's emergency humanitarian policy. However, Congo stressed that CONASUR faces major challenges, including a lack of financial and logistical resources, which severely limits its ability to carry out its missions. To enhance its effectiveness, it is crucial that CONASUR receive increased support from technical and financial partners.

VI. ECOWAS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON IHL (2019-2023): ASSESSMENT AND OUTLOOK

The session opened with a short intervention by the ICRC's Regional Legal Adviser for West Africa, Ms Elvina Pothelet, who presented the background to the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Representatives of Member States and ECOWAS, in accordance with their commitments, will have to take part in this meeting scheduled for 2024 and report on the implementation of the 2019-2023 action plan. The ICRC's Regional Legal Adviser for West Africa took the opportunity to present some of the main developments in the field of IHL during the period under review. She mentioned, in particular, the Resolutions taken in the context of the fight against terrorism: Humanitarian exemption and safeguarding the rights of humanitarian law, the protection of children associated with armed groups and the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (Dublin Declaration, November 2022 supported by more than 80 States).

Following this intervention, Mr. Olatunde introduced a session of exchanges on the ECOWAS Action Plan 2019-2023. He was keen to deliver, on his own behalf and on behalf of the ECOWAS leadership that mandated him, a short analysis of the implementation of the ECOWAS Action Plan 2012-2017-2018-2023. In this regard, he regretted the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges have not allowed for an optimal implementation of this action plan within the Member States. He noted the need for national plans to be in line with the ECOWAS action plan, the need to carry out implementation monitoring missions to countries with the assistance of the ICRC and the need to produce detailed voluntary reports on the national implementation of the action plan. This analysis by Mr. Olatundé was followed by the proposal to extend the period of validity of the action plan in order to give States the opportunity to better appropriate it.

The floor was then given to the participants to give their opinion on this proposal and especially on the ideal extension period. After lively exchanges between participants and ECOWAS representatives, the proposal to extend the ECOWAS action plan was adopted. At the end of the discussions, the assembly agreed to extend the validity date of the action plan by an additional three (3) years, i.e. until 31 December 2026, by committing to find a formula for the realization of a mid-term review in order to prepare the ECOWAS report to the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

VII. ECOWAS CONTRIBUTION TO THE 34TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT

The final session of the Meeting was dedicated to the preparation of the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (“the International Conference”), which is scheduled to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 28 to 31 October 2024.⁶ Mrs. Elvina Pothelet, ICRC Regional Legal Adviser, presented the nature, objectives, modalities and timetable of the preparations for the Conference and encouraged ECOWAS Member States to take an active part in it. The International Conference meets every four years to reflect and take decisions on pressing humanitarian issues. It is a unique global forum where States, as High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, make joint commitments with the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – namely, the 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the ICRC – and key humanitarian partners. In this way, this conference contributes to the respect and development of IHL, and other norms and policies that improve the lives of people affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies.

The representative of ICRC said that one of the main outcomes of the International Conference was the adoption of “resolutions”, which were the official decisions of the International Conference and were adopted by consensus. They constitute clear commitments on the part of the members of the Conference. Conference members are also encouraged to submit “commitments”, which are voluntary and non-legally binding, but which express a willingness to act. Commitments are powerful diplomatic tools that can be used to initiate or continue dialogue on different humanitarian issues. At the 33rd International Conference (2019), ECOWAS and its Member States tabled a joint commitment entitled “Implementation, transposition into national laws and dissemination of international humanitarian law (IHL) in West Africa”.⁷ This commitment had contributed in particular to raising their commitment to the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on IHL at the international level.

All members of the International Conference who submitted a pledge at the 33rd International Conference are invited to report on its implementation by the 34th International Conference.⁸ During this exchange session, it was highlighted that a report on ECOWAS’ engagement submitted to the 33rd International Conference would illustrate its collective impact and highlight the good practices of ECOWAS Member States in the implementation of IHL, while identifying the challenges that remain to be met. The report would also serve as an example for other regional organizations to take similar collective action.

On the basis of these elements, and as a follow-up to an exchange session, the participants in the annual meeting decided to present to the 34th International Conference a report on the implementation of their commitment at the 33rd International Conference. This report could also serve as a mid-term review of the Regional Action Plan. The report should be submitted by ECOWAS, on the dedicated virtual platform of the International Conference website, by 30 June 2024.

6 See the official website of the 34th International Conference: <https://rcrcconference.org/fr/about-4/34th-international-conference/>

7 Available here: <https://rcrcconference.org/pledge/mise-en-oeuvre-transposition-dans-les-lois-nationales-et-diffusion-du-droit-international-humanitaire-dih-en-afrique-de-louest/>

8 See <https://rcrcconference.org/fr/about-4/reporting/>

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 19th annual ECOWAS-ICRC meeting on the implementation of IHL in West Africa resulted in the adoption of several recommendations (*see Annex III*). With regard to the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on IHL (2019–2023), it was decided to extend it by 3 years, i.e. until 31 December 2026. It was further decided to prepare a report on the implementation of the ECOWAS commitment to the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, for submission to the 34th International Conference (scheduled for October 2024). Regarding National IHL Commissions, participants urged Member States that do not yet have an IHRC to establish one, and Member States that have an IHRC to provide it with the necessary means to carry out its mission. Finally, with regard to the theme of this 19th annual meeting, namely the prevention and response to internal displacement, the participants urged Member States to accede to the Kampala Convention and to effectively implement it. They further stressed the importance of seeking durable solutions to internal displacement, in consultation with internally displaced persons and host communities.

At the closing ceremony, Mr. Olatunde Olayemi on behalf of the Director Humanitarian and Social Affairs of ECOWAS Dr. Sintiki T. Ugbe, thanked the participants for their presence and active contribution to the smooth running of the seminar. Mr. Olayemi reiterated the institution's commitment to continue collaboration with the ICRC and to follow up on the recommendations of the 19th annual meeting.

In his closing remarks, the Deputy Head of the ICRC Delegation in Nigeria, Mr. Rafiullah Qureshi, expressed his gratitude to the participants for their active participation and rich contribution to the discussions. He welcomed the progress made in the implementation of IHL since the last annual meeting, despite the material and security difficulties affecting several contexts in the region, while acknowledging that many challenges remained to ensure better protection for people affected by armed conflicts in the region. He urged participants to continue and strengthen their efforts to implement IHL at the national level, and to contribute to the exchange of good practices at the (sub)regional level.

APPENDIX I – MEETING PROGRAM

ECOWAS-ICRC ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING	
On the implementation of international humanitarian law (IHL) in West Africa 12-14 September 2023 – Abuja, Nigeria	
DAY 1 - SEPTEMBER 12, 2023	
09:00 – 09:30	Arrival and registration of participants
OPENING CEREMONY: Moderator: Director, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe	
09:30 – 10:00	Welcome by the ICRC Accredited Representative to ECOWAS Mr. Yann BONZON
	Welcome by the Commissioner for Human Development and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Fatou Sow SARR
	Opening Remarks by the Representative of the Minister of Justice of Nigeria
10:00 – 10:30	<i>Coffee break and group photo</i>
10:30 – 10:45	Presentation and adoption of the programme, objectives of the meeting and election of officers
REPORTING SESSION:	
Taking stock of the contribution of ECOWAS Member States to improving compliance with IHL: implementation of the ECOWAS Action Plan on IHL in 2022-2023, prospects and priorities for 2024	
Moderator: ECOWAS	
10:45 – 11:45	Participation in IHL treaties - Introduction and moderation: Ms Pélagie MANZAN DEKOU, Senior Legal Adviser, ICRC-Abidjan - State reports highlighting the context, achievements, challenges (max. 10 min per intervention). - Focus on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, ICRC Discussion
11:45 – 13:30	Implementation of IHL at the national level - Introduction and moderation: Mr Koue Stéphane OURIGBALE, Legal Adviser, ICRC-Abidjan - State reports highlighting the context, achievements, challenges (max. 10 min per intervention). - ICRC resources for States, ICRC Discussion
13:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch</i>
14:30 – 15:45	National IHL Commissions - Introduction and moderation: Mr Sechie Solomon PHILIP, Legal Adviser, ICRC-Abuja - State reports highlighting the context, achievements, challenges (max. 10 min per intervention). - National and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law: Guidelines for Success, ICRC Discussion
15:45 – 17:00	Presentation by ECOWAS
17:00 – 17:30	Conclusions and concluding remarks ECOWAS Commission
17:30	Cocktail reception

DAY 2 - SEPTEMBER 13, 2023	
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival of participants
09:00 – 09:05	Introduction of the theme and program of the day
THEMATIC SESSION: Preventing and Responding to Internal Displacement in West Africa	
09:05– 09:50	Internal displacement and humanitarian consequences: regional overview Moderator: Ms. Juliet Kelechi Unubi, Humanitarian Affairs Counsellor and ECOWAS Multilateral Liaison Officer, ICRC-Abuja Speakers: - Ms. Mwhaki KINYANJUI, Senior Protection Specialist, UNHCR Office - Mr. Charles NWANELO, Deputy Director, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Nigeria - Ms. Séyram APETOGB0, National Coordinator of Assistance to Refugees a.i., Ministry of Social Affairs, Togo
09:50 – 10:55	Contemporary challenges related to internal displacement in West Africa Moderator: ECOWAS Speakers: - Mr. Abdou Moumouni OUEDRAOGO, Permanent Secretary of CIMDH, Burkina Faso - Ms Angélique SARR, Regional Adviser on Internal Displacement, ICRC (online) Discussion
10:55 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:15	Improving protection and assistance to IDPs Moderator: Mrs Angela Francis, Deputy Coordinator DM/RFL/Migration, Nigerian Red Cross Society Speakers : - Ms. Clémentine ANDRE, Regional Coordinator for Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA Region, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) - Mr Sébastien BOURGOIN, Protection Coordinator, ICRC-Abuja - Ms. Mwhaki KINYANJUI, Senior Protection Specialist, UNHCR Office Discussion
12:15 - 13:15	Lunch
13:15 – 14:20	The Kampala Convention: A single roadmap to prevent and respond to displacement Moderator: to be confirmed Speakers: - Professor Chaloka Beyani, Associate Professor of International Law at the Department of Law at the London School of Economics (LSE), AU expert - ECOWAS Discussion
14:20 – 15:35	National implementation of the Kampala Convention: challenges and recommendations Moderator: Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, Director, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, ECOWAS (tbc) Speakers: - Professor Chaloka Beyani, Associate Professor of International Law at the Department of Law at the London School of Economics (LSE), AU expert - Mr. Hamid MAHAMAT, Coordinator and Protection Officer, National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Repatriates (CNARR), Chad (online) - Dr. Patrick Etta OYONG, Director, Legal Drafting Department, Federal Ministry of Justice, Nigeria - Ms Tongret Shallom GOWON, Legal Adviser, ICRC-Abuja Discussion

15:35 – 15:50	Coffee break
15:50 – 16:50	From the Right to Action: Practical Measures to Make the Kampala Convention Effective Moderator: Pierre GUIGEMDE, Legal Adviser, ICRC-Ouagadougou Speakers: - Mr. Rasmane CONGO, Foreign Affairs Counsellor, Directorate of Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Burkina Faso - Ms Paula GAVIRIA BETANCUR, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (online) Discussion
16:50 – 17:30	Recommendations and summary Moderators: ICRC and ECOWAS
DAY 3 - SEPTEMBER 14, 2023	
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival of participants
Developments in IHL	
09:00 – 09:30	Presentation on some recent developments in the field of IHL Dr. Elvina POTHELET, Regional Legal Adviser for West Africa, ICRC-Dakar
ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on IHL (2019-2023): assessment and outlook Moderator: ECOWAS	
09:30 – 10:15	Assessment and proposals: Overview of the Action Plan (Background, Objective, Scope) Online survey results How can reporting be improved?
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 11:30	Plenary Discussions
ECOWAS contribution to the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Moderator: ICRC	
11:30 – 12:00	What to expect at the 34th International Conference? Dr. Elvina POTHELET, Regional Legal Adviser for West Africa, ICRC
12:00 – 13:00	Report on ECOWAS' engagement at the 33rd International Conference?
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:00	An ECOWAS commitment at the 34th International Conference? Group discussion
Recommendations	
15:00 – 16:00	Adoption of the recommendations and conclusions of the meeting Plenary
CLOSING SESSION Moderator : ECOWAS/ICRC	
16:00 – 16:30	Remarks by Mr. Yann Bonzon Head of Delegation, ICRC-Abuja
	Remarks by Professor Fatou Sow Sarr , Commissioner, Human Development and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission
	Address by the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to ECOWAS (tbc)

APPENDIX II – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

No.	COUNTRY	FIRST NAMES	LAST NAMES	FUNCTIONS	INSTITUTIONS
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEMBER STATES					
1	Benin	Eric-Marcel	AHEHEHINNOU	Magistrate, Collaborator of the Director of Human Rights	Department of Justice
2	Burkina Faso	Mr. Abdou Moumouni	OUEDRAOGO	Permanent Secretary of the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights	Department of Justice
3	Burkina Faso	Bernadette Marie	NATHAN	Director General of African Integration	MAE
4	Burkina Faso	Rasmane	CONGO	Foreign Affairs Advisor, Directorate of Legal and Consular Affairs	MAE
5	Cabo Verde	Dr. Arlindo	SOUSA SANCHES	Legal Adviser of the National Commission of Human Rights and Citizenship (Comissão Nacional para os Direitos Humanos e a Cidadania - CNDHC)	Ministry of Justice
6	Ivory Coast	Anick	BIDIA-ZADI	Director General of Legal, Consular and Civil Registry Affairs,	Ministry of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and the Diaspora
7	Ivory Coast	Jérôme	TRABI	President of the National Committee on IHL, Deputy Director of Legislation	Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
8	Ghana	Mother Teresa	BREW	Attorney, Civil Division, Office of the Attorney General	Ministry of Justice
9	Guinea	ROBERT II	KAMANO	Deputy National Director of Human Rights	MINJUSDH
10	Guinea Bissau	Sunfon	NA FAFE	Tecnico Superior	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
11	Liberia	Cllr. BoaKai N.	Kanneh	Honorable Co-chair LIHLC Commissioner, Law Reform Commission Monrovia – Republic of Liberia	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12	Mali	Abdramane Niama	TEMPLE	National Coordinator of Internally Displaced Persons Sites	Department of Health and Social Development

13	Mali	Mahamadou Bakoroba	DRAMA	Case Manager at the Legal Affairs Department	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
14	Nigeria	Fatimoh Imam	Nurudeen	ECOWAS National Unit	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
15	Nigeria	Charles	Nwanelo Anaelo	Deputy Director, Humanitarian Affairs Department	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development
16	Nigeria	Nnanna	IBOM	Director, International and Comparative Law Department, Head of Secretariat of the NCiHL	Federal Ministry of Justice
17	Nigeria	Abimbola	AJILEYE	Assistant Director, International and Comparative Law Department, Focal person/ Secretary, NCiHL	Federal Ministry of Justice
18	Nigeria	Rovieno	DICKSON-AMAGADA	Assistant Chief State Council, International and Comparative Law Department	Federal Ministry of Justice
19	Senegal	Ngane	NDOUR	Director of Human Rights and Permanent Secretary of the NCDH-IHL	Ministry of Justice
20	Sierra Leone	Mohamed Lamin	TARAWALLEY	Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice	Minister of justice
21	Sierra Leone	Allieu Vandi	KOROMA	Senior State Counsel	Minister of justice
22	Togo	Komlan	MIDOTEPE	Project Manager	Ministry of Justice and Legislation
23	Togo	Séyram	APETOGB0	National Refugee Assistance Coordinator a.i.	Ministry of Social Action, Advancement of Women and Literacy
EXPERTS					
	Teacher.	Chaloka	BEYANI	Associate Professor of International Law at the Department of Law at the London School of Economics (LSE), AU expert	London School of Economics (LES), AU expert
	Chad	Hamid	MAHAMAT,	Coordinator and protection officer	National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees (CNARR), Chad
	Nigeria	Patrick Etta	OYONG,	Director of the Legal drafting department	Federal Ministry of Justice
	Nigeria	Mwihaki	KINYANJUI	Senior Protection Specialist	UNHCR Office

		Paula	GAVIRIA BETANCUR	UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons	UN
		Clementine	ANDRE	Regional Coordinator for Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA Region	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
ICRC PARTICIPANTS					
1	Nigeria	Yann	Bonzon	Head of Delegation	ICRC
2	Nigeria	Rafiullah	Qureshi	Head of Programs & Prevention	ICRC
3	Regional	Elvina	Pothelet	Regional Legal Adviser	ICRC
4	Ivory Coast	Pelagia	Manzan Dékou	Legal Counsel supra	ICRC
5	Burkina Faso	Stone	Guigemde	Legal adviser	ICRC
6	Mali	Sokhona	Diawara	Legal adviser	ICRC
7	Ivory Coast	Koue Stéphane	Ourigbale	Legal adviser	ICRC
8	Nigeria	Sechiel	Philip	Legal adviser	ICRC
9	Nigeria	Juliet Kelechi	Unubi	Humanitarian Diplomacy Adviser for ECOWAS	ICRC
10	Nigeria	Sebastian	Bourgoin	Protection Coordinator	ICRC
11	Regional	Angelic	Sarr	Regional Adviser for Internally Displaced Persons	ICRC
ECOWAS PARTICIPANTS					
2	Nigeria	Dr. Sintiki	Tarfa Ugbe	Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs	ECOWAS
3	Nigeria	Mr. Olatunde	Olayemi	Program Officer, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs	ECOWAS
4	Nigeria	AliTiloh	Bassasso Essossinam	Program Officer, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs	ECOWAS
5	Nigeria	Tamwakat	Elizabeth Golit	Embedded Expert, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs	ECOWAS
6	Nigeria	Osondu	Ekeh	Embedded Expert, Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs	ECOWAS

ANNEX III – RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED AT THE 19TH ANNUAL MEETING

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ECOWAS-ICRC ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING ON IHL

1. The meeting urges Member States (MS) that have not yet done so to complete and share the IHL questionnaires with ECOWAS and the ICRC, in order to get a comprehensive picture of the status of IHL implementation in the region;

Regarding the Regional Action Plan and ECOWAS engagement at the 33rd International Conference:

2. Decides to extend the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on IHL (2019–2023) for an additional period of 3 years, until 31 December 2026, and urges Member States to continue and strengthen efforts to implement the ECOWAS Action Plan;
3. Agrees to prepare a report on the implementation of the ECOWAS commitment resulting from the 33rd International Conference and submit it by June 2024;

Concerning the National Commissions on IHL:

4. Urges Member States that do not yet have a CNDIH to take steps to establish one, as they are essential to guide, support and coordinate the implementation of international humanitarian law.
5. Urges Member States that have a National IHL Commission to provide them with the necessary means to carry out their mission

Regarding the prevention and response to internal displacement:

6. Considering that the Kampala Convention guarantees meaningful protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, urges Member States that are not yet parties to the Convention to take concrete steps to accede to it;
7. Considering that the Kampala Convention can only achieve its full potential if it is effectively implemented, recommends that Member States urgently take all necessary measures to fully implement the Convention, including with the coordinated support of the ICRC and ECOWAS, as appropriate;
8. Stresses that, in the face of the increasingly protracted nature of displacement in the region, the search for durable solutions remains crucial, and urge Member States to integrate durable solutions considerations from the outset of the response to a displacement situation and that internally displaced persons, refugees and host communities be included in consultations and decision-making on assistance responses, and protection, as well as sustainable solutions.
9. Urges States to continue efforts to collect and protect data on internally displaced persons and refugees in a disaggregated manner in order to guide national strategies.

Regarding the follow-up to the meeting:

10. The participants requested that ECOWAS report on these results to the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, at the level of ambassadors and ministers.

Abuja, 14 September 2023.

The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing universal humanitarian principles.

People know they can count on the ICRC to carry out a range of life-saving activities in conflict zones and to work closely with the communities there to understand and meet their needs. The organization's experience and expertise enables it to respond quickly, effectively and without taking sides.

 www.icrc.org
 facebook.com/ICRCinNigeria
 x.com/ICRC_Nigeria
 instagram.com/icrc_afrique

ICRC Abuja
5 Queen Elizabeth Street
Asokoro District, FCT
P.M.B 7654
T +234 810 709 5551/2
abj_abuja@icrc.org
www.icrc.org
© ICRC, July 2025

