



# The Role of the Parliament in the Democratic Control of the Security Sector

Embracing The Role. Fully.

# Objectives of the session

- Explain the notion of democratic oversight of the security sector in the African context
- Make some preliminary observations and introduce key concepts
- Identify obstacles to parliamentary / democratic oversight of the security sector
- Identify strategies to help parliamentarians fully embrace their role in democratic oversight of the security sector

# Preliminary remarks

- No Democracy without a parliament fully playing its role
- No good governance of the security sector without competent and effective parliamentary oversight
- Reminder of the historical role of the typical parliament in Africa:
  - during the pre-democratic opening period
  - during the post-democratic opening period (1990-)
- Legacy of Executive Monopoly on "Security"

# The new challenges of Security

- The current international context of security / insecurity
- The regional context (African)
- The sub-regional context:
  - Terrorism or religious extremism
  - Transnational criminality
- The challenges of human security
  - Security (in the broadest sense) as a public good
  - ➔ Current challenges cannot be addressed by the Executive alone

# New Concepts

- **Security Sector Reform (SSR)**
  - Objectives: An effective, accountable, security sector, respectful of the rule of law; conflict prevention
  - Principles: Political, holistic, integral part of a process of a democratization process, transparency, inclusivity,
- **Security Sector Governance (SSG)**
  - A redefinition of security. Security for all, by all.
  - In contrast to the "security" of a regime, a man which passed for "security of the state"
  - Security (even in a restricted sense) as a public good
- **Human security (in all its dimensions)**

# Responsibilities, Parliamentary Powers

- "The power of the purse" (within limits!)
- Power to legislate
- Power to control government action
- Reflect, represent the interests, feelings of the people, keep them informed
- Regional level: Regimes /Norms of good governance enacted by the RECs (example: ECOWAS since 1999); see also AU RSS Policy Framework, 2013

# BRIEF CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS OF PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL

- THE 3 'As':
  - Authority
  - Aptitude
  - Attitude

More:

- Audacity
- Insight

**NB:** DEMOCRATIC CONTROL DOES NOT MEAN  
ANTAGONISM, HOSTILITY, WITCH HUNTS

# Parliament and GSS

- At the Heart of the Security Sector Governance:
  - To institute a culture of human dignity, human rights, human security
  - To institute, perpetuate a culture of democratic oversight of the security sector
- Help to redefine security for a democratic society
- Redistribute the security card in a democratic society
- Institutionalize relations between security institutions and democratic institutions and citizens
- Contribute to establishing / consolidating the rule of law



# Potential obstacles

- Legacy of the past; excessive deference to the Executive
- Lack of expertise (MPs, their assistants)
- Lack of resources / means
- Loss of experience and expertise through renewals (following the elections)
- Lack of political will to exercise oversight (there is a political price to pay)
- Limited access to information (defense / security)

# Potential obstacles

- Role of international actors who tend to exclude the parliament in favor of the Executive
- Absence of a parliamentary strategy on security:
  - Towards the security sector
  - Towards civil society
  - Towards constituencies/ordinary people
- Abuse of the notion of "state secret / defense secret" by senior officers and the Executive
- Secret services out of bounds (But why?)

# Embracing the Role, Nevertheless

- Raise the level of awareness of the need for good governance of the Security Sector
- Develop deep knowledge of the powers and mission of the parliament and of the legal and regulatory framework governing security
- Strengthen the capacity of MPs and parliamentary assistants in security matters, SSR, SSG; security operations; etc.
- Develop a parliamentary strategy for the SSG
- Be bold in exercising the powers of the parliament (be jealous of its institutional prerogatives)

# Embrace the Role

- Raise awareness of, and mobilize civil society and citizens to SSG issues ('democratize security')
- Remain vigilant and active in the management of the security sector, including budgetary issues
- Strengthen the powers and the jurisdiction of the relevant committees
- Establish ongoing relations and exchanges with other parliaments on security matters

# Embrace the Role

- Encourage the development of security expertise in civil society and make use of it
- Develop a pragmatic and collaborative spirit with security sector actors and the Executive in general to effectively address the challenges
- demonstrate through actions and consistency that the parliament is trustworthy in its role in the SSG: Be the model!
- Consider and engage in SSG activities for the long run

# CONCLUSIONS

What we covered:

- The centrality of the role of parliament in Democracy
- The importance of security governance and the role of a responsible, competent, and effective parliamentary oversight
- The historical role of parliament (pre- and post-democratic era)
  - Legacy of the Executive's Monopoly on Security
- Introduction of key concepts: SSR, SSG, Human Security
- Potential obstacles to parliamentary control
- Strategies to overcome them

END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND QUESTIONS  
ARE WELCOME