



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

WEST AFRICA PARLIAMENTARIANS FORUM 2023: STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARLIAMENT AND THE SECURITY SECTOR

INFORMATION NOTE

- WHAT:** The Africa Center will hold an academic program for West African parliamentarians, their staff, and select defense and security officials to analyze current trends, challenges, and innovations in the work of legislatures to foster democratic and civilian control of the security sector. The roles of both parliamentarians and defense and security officials in oversight, accountability, and outreach processes will be discussed.
- WHERE:** Accra, Ghana
- WHEN:** 27 February – 3 March 2023
- WHO:** The program will target 60 participants, comprised of 40 parliamentarians and staff, as well as 20 senior security sector officials with duties to maintain relations with parliament. The following countries will be invited: Benin, The Gambia, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Other invitees will include officials from the ECOWAS Commission, ECOWAS Parliament, ECOWAS Female Parliamentarians Network, Pan African Parliament, Parliamentary Network of the World Bank/IMF, African Parliamentarians' Network Against Corruption, African Security Sector Network, AFRICOM J5, State/DRL, and USAID. To ensure comprehensive peer learning, nominees must include women and men, as well as incumbent and opposition parties. To ensure the program's objectives are met, each country's delegation must include parliamentary officials and security/defense officials.
- WHY:** While parliaments are core to achieving a healthy system of checks and balances that facilitates defense and security sector oversight, their work is also difficult in many African countries' strongly presidential systems. Legislators have the potential to play critical security sector governance roles: overseeing security budgets and spending, helping to enhance security force transparency and accountability, and conducting constituent outreach to create people-centered security policies that reflect citizen interests and civil society expertise. African parliamentarians need knowledge, information, and vibrant working relationships with defense and security officials to excel in these roles. Frequently, however, neither

parliamentarians nor the defense and security officials charged with legislative engagement are as closely networked or as mutually informed as they could be. This hinders their ability to capitalize on common interests in using the defense and security sector governance process to build legitimacy with citizens. This year's forum will catalyze peer learning on how to strengthen relationships between parliaments and the defense and security sector.

HOW: The forum will foster practical analysis of the roles that both parliamentarians and defense and security officials play in the oversight, accountability, and outreach processes that are core parts of legislative involvement in defense and security sector governance. Participants in the forum will analyze conceptual approaches, practical tools, and comparative lessons learned from across the region on how they can create space for the exercise of the 3As (ability, authority, and attitude) in their oversight, accountability, and outreach work, both in concert and in tension with their counterparts.

The forum will be in-person for five days and include plenary sessions, discussion groups, and a site visit. Innovations, good practices, and lessons will also be generated through a series of country-specific consultations between parliamentary and security officials, with conclusions presented in a comparative brief-back. The program will be held in English and French under a strict policy of non-attribution.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

1. Deepen understanding of parliamentary roles in providing checks and balances for democratic and civilian security sector governance and contextualize these roles in relation to those that security sector officials play vis-à-vis parliaments in the region.
2. Analyze how parliamentarians and their staff as well as defense and security officials can capitalize on synergies and navigate tensions in their work, particularly on issues like professionalism/ethics, budgets/strategy, and building community relationships.
3. Expand understanding of tools, techniques, and practices that African parliamentarians and security officials can use – both in concert and in tension – to enhance delivery of security to citizens through the 3As (ability, authority, and attitude).