



Geneva, 21 June 2006

Dear Sir / Madam

Geneva Call and the Program for the Study of International Organization(s) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, sponsored a landmark workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November 2005, which brought together 40 women leaders from armed opposition groups in Africa that are currently in conflict or that have recently moved into post-conflict phases. We would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the publication of the workshop report, which we believe would be of interest to your organisation. The workshop objectives plus an overview of the report are annexed below.

Geneva Call is an independent international humanitarian nongovernmental organisation (NGO). Since 2000 the organisation has dedicated itself to engaging NSAs in adhering to the anti-personnel mine ban and other humanitarian norms. Geneva Call works in partnership with local NGOs and members of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The Ottawa Treaty, the major international instrument on landmines, applies only to States. Geneva Call complements the treaty by having NSAs sign a Deed of Commitment to renounce the use and stockpiling of mines.

The final report is authored by Dr Dyan Mazurana. It includes an Executive Summary plus "Executive Lessons Learned and Recommendations" designed to be accessible for quick reference to the recommendations stemming from the workshop.

We would be very pleased should you wish to assist Geneva Call in distributing the important and valuable findings of the workshop by publishing the report on your website, and/or distributing the report in electronic format to members and member organisations of your network. There is also the possibility to receive the report in hardcopy. At the present time the report is available in English. It will shortly be translated into French.

The report is entitled "Women in Armed Opposition Groups in Africa and the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights", and is available to be downloaded at [www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-23nov05-women.pdf](http://www.genevacall.org/resources/testi-publications/gc-23nov05-women.pdf). If you would like to request the report in hardcopy, or obtain further information about the workshop itself, please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@genevacall.org](mailto:info@genevacall.org).

Yours sincerely,

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## ANNEX

### *Objectives of the Workshop*

The objective of the 2005 “Africa workshop” was to identify ways of strengthening the understanding and observance of international humanitarian and human rights law within the African armed groups and their political wings. At the same time, the workshop sought to contribute to African and international organisations’ understanding of and ability to work with armed opposition groups to promote and uphold international humanitarian and human rights norms. Four topics were discussed during the workshop: humanitarian law, human rights law, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and transition into governance roles.

### *Workshop Outputs*

During the working group on humanitarian rules, participants deliberated on the limits of action in armed conflict and where these limits arose from, including their own traditional and religious values, personal beliefs, the groups’ ideology or code of conduct. Those limits were then compared to the limits within international humanitarian law. They then discussed ideas and strategies on how to improve knowledge and compliance of the international humanitarian rules, and their ability, as women, to influence the conduct of other members of their armed groups.

In the working group on human rights, participants exchanged views on the meaning of human rights from their experiences as women within armed groups, the interpretation of the laws from the various conventions, and strategies of enforcement of these rights. Sexual and gender-based violations were frequently raised throughout the discussions, with the participants making clear statements regarding that as women, their rights and those of other women and girls, were consistently not upheld. The participants highlighted that a strong understanding of women’s human rights was a necessary step in working towards the realisation of those rights.

The working group on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes discussed what occurred in those processes and who was able to benefit and who was excluded. They came up with concrete actions that needed to occur in order to have more successful DDR programs that benefited men and women combatants and the communities into which they sought to reintegrate. The participants also exchanged views on what security means for women, including women ex-combatants, in the presence of the numerous weapons that remain in communities even after a DDR process.

In the working group on governance participants deliberated on the leadership roles they undertook in their armed groups and which of these skills were transferable to leadership capacities in a civilian setting. The group furthermore discussed the challenges women in armed groups face in participating in peace negotiations or constructing peace agendas. They also strategised on how to address and overcome some of the challenges they face as women in transitioning into civilian leadership roles.

At the conclusion of the workshop the participants emphasised the importance of advocacy, networking nationally and regionally, information-sharing, capacity-building, and training to strengthen women's leadership abilities to help them gain a greater voice in processes relating to each of the four substantive concerns of the workshop.