



*The negotiations in Accra in July 2004, formed part of a series of regional and international meetings which were held in an attempt to bring peace back to Côte d'Ivoire. © ONU / Eskinder Debebe.*

The events of September 19th, 2002 marked a turning point in the history of Cote d'Ivoire. In just a few days this country West African country found itself divided in two with the northern part controlled by rebels while and the south remained under the control of the State. Between the two, a " zone of trust " was established by the French army, intervened as part of "Operation Unicorn " to protect French nationals and other foreigners living in the country.

Since then, several initiatives aimed at bringing back peace in Ivory Coast took place.

A mediation process was led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which deployed peacekeeping troops, from January, 2003. In this same month, under France's mediation, an agreement was signed by the Ivorian parties in which they agreed to form a Government of National Reconciliation, among other commitments. The Government of National Reconciliation began its work in April 2003 and on 3rd May, 2003, the parties involved in the conflict signed a Ceasefire Agreement.

On 13th May, 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1479 establishing the United Nations Mission in Cote D'Ivoire (UNMCI), which was replaced by the United Nations

Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on 4th April 2004 and the 1,300 ECOWAS peacekeepers soldiers started operating under the UN mandate.

Successive meetings in Accra and in Prétoria led to agreements on several sensitive points, particularly the prickly question of eligibility in presidential elections and disarmament. Since then there have been a number of obstacles to the peace process.

Among these is the sensitive issue of identification: a significant part of the population, especially in the North, are not able to claim all their civil rights because they do not have identity cards.



Mixed patrol (Ivorian defence forces, UNOCI's military and civilian police). © ONUCI / Ky Chung

Land conflicts also constitute a source of constant tension.

Moreover, the persistence of inter-ethnic violence, especially in the west of the country, threatens to obstruct the steps being taken towards peace and reconciliation, thereby delaying an end to the crisis with in turn has repercussions in every aspect of daily life.

As a result of the crisis, many more people are now armed since both sides have been recruiting local fighters as well as foreign ex-combatants from Liberia and Sierra Leone. Today, there are almost 48,000 ex-combatants expected to take part in the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process.