

## **UPR to improve respect for human rights in Mano River Union**

10.07.2012

Government officials, national human rights institutions, and human rights defenders from Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia are convening in Monrovia to examine their countries' human rights progress.

Government officials, national human rights institutions, and human rights defenders from Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia are convening in Monrovia to examine their countries' human rights progress.

The workshop, which runs from 9 to 12 July, is organised by ISHR and the Liberia Coalition for Human Rights Defenders (LCHRD). It will train 23 participants on how to use international and regional human rights systems. In particular, the participants will examine each country's progress towards implementing human rights recommendations made by the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. Training on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights will also be included in the programme.

Manager of ISHR's regional human rights defenders programme, Clement Voulé says the meeting presents a unique opportunity for government and civil society to work together to advance respect for human rights.

'The UPR is a process that involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States once every four years. Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia have all been reviewed under the UPR once before - when concerns were raised about the issue of truth and reconciliation in each country, and also the protection of women. This workshop will provide an opportunity for the participants to assess what progress each country has made with these and other human rights issues.'

Chairman of LCHRD, Jarwlee Tweh Geegbe praises this initiative as an engaged effort to increase knowledge of the various regional and international human rights mechanisms, ahead of these countries' reviews in the second round of the UPR process.

Mr Voulé adds that the discussions between government officials, national human rights institutions and human rights defenders are also an opportunity to work together to identify steps that can be taken when they return home, to make sure all the recommendations from the first UPR reviews are fully implemented.

The training course, which is made possible by the support of Irish Aid and Diakonie, will involve both theoretical familiarisation with the UPR as well as practical planning sessions. Defenders will share advocacy experiences from their respective countries with one another, identify trends and patterns of the UPR, and consider other issues, such as reprisals against those working with human rights mechanisms.