

to which relevant information would be supplied by states. It also calls for the harmonisation of legislation to avoid circulation/smuggling based on uneven severity levels of punitive measures across different countries. The code includes an exemption if legitimate international peace objectives are threatened. It calls on the international community to help. Contrary to the Memorandum, the code also encourages the creation of National Commissions with civil society and government representatives to address the small arms and light weapons issue. The Moratorium and the codes of conduct are perceived as a basis for peace in West Africa.

Deirdre van der Merwe (Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa) outlined existing initiatives aimed at the protection of children in armed conflict and argued that they should be complemented by a voluntary code of conduct. There are three broad areas where codes of conduct can have a possible positive impact on the plight of children in armed conflict:

1. humanitarian action (code of conduct of the ICRC, and the SPHERE project)
2. small arms (International Code of Conduct on Arms and Transfers, Wassenaar Arrangement of 1996, European Union's 1998 Code of Conduct governing illicit transfers of conventional arms and others)
3. incorporating and emphasising the rights of children in armed conflict in military codes of conduct.

It is impossible to establish a direct causal link between the development of legal instruments, behavioural codes, and training programmes on one hand, and improvements on the ground, on the other. Nevertheless, the legal body addressing children's rights in armed conflicts is growing and evolving. These legal instruments include: International Humanitarian Law, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 1989), UN Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999) dedicated to children in war zones, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1991). While setting international standards is important, all treaties need political will and public pressure for their implementation. There is a need for an international norm that would provide guidelines for states and other parties on what the view of the international community is on issues of war-affected children. This need points to first, the link between international legal instruments and voluntary codes of conduct based on moral principles. Second, it offers a way of regulating the behaviour of non-state actors in armed conflict.

While there exists a controversy about the feasibility, effectiveness, and efficiency of voluntary codes of conduct, one may argue that they increase ethical sensitivity and judgement. Codes may strengthen support for individuals' moral courage and help to hone an organisation's sense of identity. Codes are reflections of the morally permissible standards of conduct which members of a group make binding upon themselves. The development of a military code of conduct that emphasises child's rights could be useful. There needs to be an understanding in the military of critical issues involving youth, such as:

- the importance of youth to society's future
- various maturity levels of children
- physical development of children
- the principle that children's interests should be held in higher regard than military