

**THE POLICE,  
THE PEOPLE,  
THE POLITICS:  
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY IN EAST AFRICA**

**CONCLUDING STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

On 12 and 13 June 2006, representatives from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania met at a roundtable in Arusha to discuss police accountability in the East Africa region. The roundtable was facilitated by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, in collaboration with the East Africa Law Society, with participation from members of the police, civil society organisations, law societies, judiciary, academia, government bodies, National Human Rights Institutions and media.

Delegates explored the challenges to good policing in the region, including: brutality and excessive use of force, outdated legal regimes, corruption, illegitimate political interference, militarisation of civilian policing bodies, partiality, impunity, internal police culture and hierarchies, lack of transparency, lack of adequate training and resources, police recruitment processes, poor service and working conditions, lack of adherence to the rule of law and lack of reform in the broader criminal justice sector.

Reform of the police is required to provide a police service that fulfils its mandate of protecting the safety and security of all. The state has a responsibility to provide an efficient, accountable and democratic system of policing which enhances the enjoyment of rights and development. At the centre of this reform agenda is the need to ensure greater accountability of the police. In addressing this, delegates proposed the following action points:

East African police forces, civil society and national human rights institutions should

1. take maximum advocacy advantage of the various state-driven reform initiatives such as the governance, justice, law and order sector reform programmes, the poverty reduction strategy programmes and the court backlog reduction programmes;
2. take maximum advocacy advantage of the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), to be held in Kampala, Uganda to advocate for police reform;
3. advocate for the establishment of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Policing together with sister institutions in the Commonwealth;
4. expand their horizons with regard to policing and police accountability to incorporate networking, collaboration and advocacy at the regional and international level. In particular, they should endeavour to forge linkages with the East African Community's Sectoral Committee on Peace and Security;
5. seek membership and more active participation in the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF);

East African governments, police forces, civil society and national human rights institutions should

6. work towards the demilitarisation of the police and the integration of auxiliary armed forces into the mainstream police force where they can be provided with training and other resources, and also be subjected to the police oversight mechanisms;
7. support annual public hearings by appropriate parliamentary committees, as an avenue to showcase progress as well as challenges facing policing;
8. encourage the amendment of police and police-related legislation to reflect democratic principles of policing and accountable, transparent policing practices;
9. provide for the strengthening of police accountability mechanisms, with particular reference to the creation of civilian oversight bodies;
10. work towards the implementation of a legislated right to information and the increase of operational and policy transparency within the police;
11. ensure the police are adequately resourced and police service and living conditions acceptable;
12. recognise the importance of appropriate and regular policing training programmes and the development of recruitment processes based on principles of equity and equal representation.

The delegates also noted the five reports on policing in East Africa - *The Police, the people, the politics: Police accountability in Kenya*, *The Police, the people, the politics: Police accountability in Uganda*, *The Police, the people, the politics: Police accountability in Tanzania*, *A review of the Uganda Police Force budget and its effect on crime management* and *A review of the Kenya Police Force budget and its effect on crime management* – which were launched at this roundtable. The reports were produced with input from the police forces of East Africa. The delegates undertook to facilitate dissemination, particularly to governments, and more comprehensive discussion of the reports within their countries.