



UNLIREC Hosts Expert Meeting on Private Security and Rule of Law

(Lima, September 2011) - During the past two decades, private security companies have emerged and multiplied rapidly throughout Latin America and the Caribbean in response to increasing levels of citizen insecurity. According to a study conducted by the Small Arms Survey in 2011, the private security sector employed between 19 and 25 million people in more than 70 countries in the world in 2011. In Latin America and the Caribbean alone, there are close to 3 million private security guards, of which a high percentage work informally and possess and use between 800,000 and 1,300,000 firearms. These private agencies - operating in parallel to the public security forces - have gained such momentum that it is not possible to discuss public security matters without contemplating their presence and role throughout the region.

In this context and in an effort to spearhead the debate on private security and the rule of law, UNLIREC brought together regional experts from the government, civil society, and the private security sector during a regional workshop in Lima, Peru (31 August - 1 September 2011).

During this two-day workshop, experts from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Peru and Venezuela exchanged best practices and lessons-learned on how the public and private security sector co-exist and discussed the practical tools, norms and international standards which should be observed by the private security sector to safeguard the rule of law. The views shared during this symposium provided UNLIREC with invaluable feedback to deepen its understanding of the nexus between the private security sector and firearms.

The workshop concluded with the establishment of a *community of practice*, which will continue to debate and engage in efforts to develop a series of tools, which could include, inter alia, model regulations; guidelines for stockpile management and record keeping; and a catalogue of training opportunities.

This regional workshop forms part of a series of activities organized by UNLIREC, in cooperation with the Government of Spain, to address public security challenges, armed violence prevention and reduction measures.

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