



## WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)

### TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND TENTH ANNIVERSARY WANEP: CONSOLIDATING 10 YEARS OF PEACEBUILDING IN WEST AFRICA

#### **Background**

It all began in 1997, when the concept of an active and well coordinated Civil Society Organisation to contribute in the response to violence conflicts in West Africa quickly gained ground. West African Peacebuilding Practitioners argued that the emerging global system, in which West African states operate, demands that the region redefines itself and bridges the chasm between its governments and people. This initiative generated interest from various people and culminated in a field research in West Africa with support from the Winston Foundation for World Peace, the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI), and Eastern Mennonite University. The researchers visited seven countries in West Africa and held consultations with eighty-one non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The findings of the research clearly made a case for the creation of a sub-regional network to address in a collaborative manner the political paralysis and the endemic conflicts plaguing West Africa; hence the creation of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). The Founding Members and Organisations deliberated on the place of Africa in the global system. Behind the establishment of WANEP were notable and selfless people like Jean-Paul Lederach, a leading scholar in conflict transformation and peacebuilding as well as organizations such as CORDAID, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Hewlett Foundation.

At a sub-regional consultation in September 1998, the network was given a name while a clear vision and objectives was articulated by the founding members from seven West African countries. The consultation culminated with the launch of WANEP, as a regional convener of civil society. Significant strides have since been made in its effort to promote cooperative responses to peacebuilding. Today, WANEP through a Memorandum of Understanding works in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the operationalisation of the West African Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism; ECOWARN. WANEP has a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic Cultural and Social Council (ECOSOC). At the level of the African Union, WANEP sits in the Permanent Assembly of ECOSOC as a West African Regional Organisation. Over the past nine years, WANEP has deepened its search for West African solutions to West African problems by building relationships across and within states and empowering civil society groups to become active participants in the promotion and protection of human security. WANEP's vision for a just and peaceful West Africa is well elaborated and now articulated by over 450 organizations in 15 countries across West Africa.

WANEP has built its credibility on the foundation of hard work and dedication and is currently at the forefront of peacebuilding initiatives in West Africa and beyond. WANEP has worked diligently to command the trust and confidence of CSOs and intergovernmental organizations across Africa and worldwide. Today, WANEP is proud of its contribution to peacebuilding as one of the largest peacebuilding networks in Africa with massive grassroots base and a living example of collaborative peacebuilding between an inter-governmental organization and CSOs.

#### **Critical Issues**

As WANEP's visibility in the region is growing and its expertise is being sought after at all levels of West African society, it has become imperative for WANEP today to reposition itself to remain a leading and effective peacebuilding civil society organization in the sub-region, consolidate its successes, sustain its

visibility and become financially secure and sustainable. Bearing this in mind, the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary during the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting which takes place 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January will 2009 will reflect on WANEP's work, achievements and challenges. While at national level, several activities are ongoing, the 10<sup>th</sup> AGM will be a time of reflection. "WANEP: Consolidating 10 Years of Peacebuilding in West Africa," is the suitable theme for the anniversary celebrations. It will bring together WANEP network members, peacebuilding practitioners, local and regional organizations, in addition to government officials and representatives of international organizations operating in the region.

### **Goal of the AGM**

The goal of the AGM is to celebrate 10 years of Peacebuilding work in West Africa. It is important to appreciate the contributions of ordinary men and women in changing the West African landscape where violent conflicts proliferated 10 years ago and where some nation states almost totally collapsed. While celebrating the efforts of ending civil wars and rebuilding broken communities, it is also the time to reflect on how to consolidate the peace. For WANEP, it is also the time of reflection on sustaining a strong and viable institution into the future.

### **Objectives**

Briefly, the objectives of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and AGM include the following:

- Reflect on the new frontiers of building and consolidating peace in West Africa
- Appraise the work of the WANEP Network and identify new priorities for collective engagement to consolidate peace in West Africa.
- Elect a New WANEP Board
- Launch the project of "WANEP our Story" through a video documentary and a book.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting which also celebrates WANEP 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary will reflect on the new frontiers of peacebuilding and consolidation through a keynote address on the first day to stimulate reflection. After 10 years of peacebuilding work, what does the future hold? WANEP will review its core activities and programs and determine what innovative ways are available to improve on regional program design and implementation. This will require a re-examination of fund raising strategies, how to secure financial sustainability through the establishment of new partnerships. Are there new priority areas for peacebuilding that require WANEP engagement?

At the Institutional level, the AGM as part of its business will elect a new Board as required by its statutes and within the framework of its strategic plan and organisational restructuring.

The AGM will also think through and launch a special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary project; "WANEP our Story" The purpose of the project is to tell the WANEP story in a simple manner with the participation of men and women in the national networks. Through a video documentary, "WANEP our Story" will highlight the work of WANEP networks in its efforts to contribute to peace in West Africa, particularly as a model for a collaborative and integrative approach to peacebuilding. A book project with the same topic will be part of the project.