

**Speech by the Honourable Minister of the Interior at the opening ceremony
of the West Africa Peacebuilding institute (WAPI) 2010 at the Kofi Annan
International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC)
August 30, 2010**

The Commandant of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Executive Director of WANEP

Distinguished Invited Guests

Distinguished Participants

Friends from the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I deem it an honour and privilege to join you for the opening ceremony of the 9th training session of the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre for their kind invitation to me to be part of this ceremony.

We in Ghana are very delighted to have all of you here this morning and on behalf of His Excellency, the President and the good people of Ghana, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the Institute and to our country. I am told that the WAPI 2010 participants apart from our compatriots from West Africa, we also have participants from Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, Kenya and USA. We welcome you all to Ghana

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, for over two decades now, the West African sub-region and other regions of Africa had become a theatre of violent conflicts and gross human rights violations. As these violent conflicts continue to ravage the continent, Hundreds of thousands of people lose their lives, while others have become refugees or displaced;

However, let me acknowledge that in recent times, we have all realized that there has been a significant paradigm shift towards conflict prevention and transformation. The international community, regional organisations, governments have intensified their efforts through the development of multi-throng strategies to address the complex nature of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes through partnerships including partnerships with civil society organisations.

We would want to emphasize that ever since the issue of human security became enshrined in international politics, peace and security is no longer solely the preserve and responsibility of governments alone. It is the collective responsibility of all actors and stakeholders. There is therefore the need to continue having a closer interaction and collaboration and as a matter of fact a stronger collaboration between the regional bodies, governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Mr. Chairman, we can indeed acknowledge the fact that for some years now especially after the call by the former UN Secretary General, His Excellency Kofi Annan, for closer interaction and collaboration between the UN and CSOs, the role of civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention has grown and gained recognition worldwide.

In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through its various protocols continues to recognize the critical role played by civil society in complementing governments' efforts and initiatives in building peace. Thus, the contribution of civil society groups working to promote and sustain peace must not be overlooked.

It has now become more imperative to develop more effective and integrative approaches to promoting peace and stability and to empower and cooperate with members of the community, such as local women and men, youth, religious and traditional leaders. We must not fail to emphasize that this is the new and emerging path for peacebuilding. Capacity building and enhancement through training becomes very critical.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is where the role of civil society organisations such as WANEP, which has made a great impact in peacebuilding in the West Africa sub-region and beyond, becomes more and more crucial.

At this 9th training session of WAPI over the past 8 years, we must commend WANEP for remaining steadfast, keeping and sustaining its vision and mission by providing each year since 2002, this unique platform and space for learning and experience sharing.

Permit me therefore ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of my Government, to congratulate WANEP's leadership and its partners GTZ and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre for a valuable contribution to building capacity for conflict prevention in order to promote sustainable peace. Additionally, I am informed that WANEP through the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute has trained over 350 peacebuilding practitioners not only from Africa but also from the USA, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Australia.

I must congratulate and commend again WANEP for establishing and sustaining despite the many challenges, a strong and effective network among civil society organizations and putting into place the structures and strategies for cooperation in order to work toward the common goal of peace. WANEP has indeed served as a strategic partner and continues to do so as far as the Ministry is concerned. Ghana has benefitted immeasurably from your interventions and mediation efforts as we continue to strive for peaceful communities.

In conclusion, let me thank the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre for hosting the distinguished trainees from all corners of Africa and the world.

On behalf of the Government of Ghana, I wish to extend our traditional Ghanaian hospitality to all of you. I also wish to thank the donors, partners and sponsors of WAPI 2010, particularly GTZ and all those who in diverse ways contributed to making WAPI what it is today. With your unflinching and sustained support, we have a testimony that with a more proactive and cooperative efforts, we can all build peaceful communities wherever we are.

On this note, I hereby declare open the 2010 West Africa Peacebuilding Institute. Thank you.