



# West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

## Guinea: A Test of the Transitional Process

### PRESS RELEASE

Time of Release: Immediate

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding observes with concern the recent developments of the political landscape in Guinea in the run up to the second round of the Presidential elections. The division among and within the political class seems to engulf the country in a battle to win over political power at all cost. This is regrettable considering the fact that civil society and the political actors have been united in the recent past to end military rule that has plagued the country since independence in 1958. These sacrifices appear to be fading away quickly as the two major contending political parties of Professor Alpha Condé of the *Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen (RPG)* party and Mr. Cellou Dalein Diallo of the *Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)* party battle for the control of the Electoral Commission. The social fabric and conflict resilience that has held Guinea together under difficult conditions is under test as ethnic and regional divisions and political polarisation is now the order of the day.

Having worked closely with several stakeholders in Guinea through consultations and capacity building as well as election monitoring under the auspices of ECOWAS; WANEP appreciates the initiatives of various stakeholders (the interim Government, civil society, religious groups, the International Contact Group on Guinea, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, the International Community and Development Partners etc) towards ensuring peaceful and democratic outcome of the transition process.

The increasing tensions, insecurity, ethnic/primordial allegiances and the ongoing impasse that led to the postponement of the run-off elections initially scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010 convey 'red flag' risks and require a serious multi-stakeholder response effort to prevent Guinea from imploding into election violence. We underscore the urgent need for all stakeholders to join hands in ensuring that Guinea does not slip towards inter-ethnic confrontation and armed violence.

In the framework of the 2010 year of peace in Africa, the "*Make-peace-happen*" efforts of the 53 member States of the AU and the efforts of ECOWAS, the UN and

International Community for peace to prevail in Africa need to be bolstered while local and international pressure is maintained for the Guinean elections to hold in a non violent, free, fair and transparent manner in conformity with international standards.

As the Civil Society partner in the operationalization of the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) and a member of the Peace and Security Cluster of the AU ECOSOCC General Assembly and having followed the political developments in Guinea, WANEP recommends the following:

- A suitable date informed by consultations and consensus should be fixed for the second round of the elections without further delay.
- The interim government should ensure and demonstrate neutrality in managing the affairs of the elections
- Independence of the Electoral Commission must not be compromised. It should be allowed to carry out its constitutional mandate without any form of external or internal influence.
- Though political party representation in the electoral commission is crucial for confidence to return to the process at this moment, the key officers of the commission should not be partisan.
- The two major contending political parties should exercise restraint and play by the rules and dictates of democratic elections. In doing so, the parties should trust and support the institution in charge of the elections rather than undermine it.
- Civil society should continue to sensitize the populace on active non violence, peace, unity and the implications of ethnic based politics
- ECOWAS, the AU and the International Community should continue to provide technical and resource support to the process while maintaining pressure for speedy return to constitutional order.
- Security must be boasted during and after the elections to safeguard the electoral materials and prevent escalation of conflict
- The army must continue supporting the democratic process and resist all temptation to usurp power

WANEP remains positive and confident in the ability of the Guinean authority to organise the elections in a free and fair manner and is committed to working with all stakeholders in realising this.

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September 29, 2010  
Accra, Ghana