

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2010]

On behalf of the Regional Board, I am delighted to express our appreciation to all the member-organisations of WANEP, the National Boards and National Secretariats, the Regional Secretariat and the WANEP-Management Team. Over the past year, the Governance structure of WANEP has provided mutual accountability within the organisation and enhanced the institutional performance of the Network. We must sustain good governance and a high level of institutional performance within WANEP in order to optimise our effectiveness of peacebuilding and conflict prevention in West Africa.

The past year has witnessed several activities through which WANEP contributed to enhance human security. These activities continue to raise the profile of WANEP at national and regional level as well as in the international peacebuilding community. WANEP's contribution to the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Mechanism through the Early Warning System-ECOWARN continues to be highly appreciated. WANEP also increased its contribution in the work of the African Union Peace and Security Commission under the "*Make Peace Happen*" declaration of the Africa Union. I take particular note of WANEP's contribution to the Dili process on international dialogue and statebuilding and WANEP representation as one of the four civil society organisations on the working group on Political Dialogue of the Dili process. While commending WANEP's efforts, the emerging threat to peace and stability in West Africa during the year under review has been around the organisation of credible and peaceful elections. This is a new frontier in which the integration of peacebuilding and statebuilding informs the West African context much more forcefully. More than ever before, WANEP must coordinate and play a leadership role in enhancing the capacity of civil society in the promotion of human security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The experiences of building peace and the challenges in this effort during the year make it imperative to work towards building internal state capacity for political dialogue. How state institutions especially those who manage elections can be supported to perform their roles professionally and with all sense of impartiality without any hindrance is a critical component of statebuilding. In-country political dialogue should be nurtured with the development of state institutions that have integrity and the respect of citizens. While these institutions will work to promote dialogue, the environment for building better state-society relations will increase trust, cohesion and inclusive democratic practices which all enhance the organisation of peaceful political transitions. I urge all member organisations and the national networks to integrate this important need at national levels in the design of national programs while the regional secretariat provides the support and sustains the international linkages and advocacy to push this further.

The year 2010 was a very rewarding one. Albeit the challenges, Niger succeeded in completing all the necessary preparations for the conduct of elections in early 2011. Guinea-Conakry demonstrated resilience and succeeded in the first ever democratic transition in that country. This happened with great difficulty at a time some international institutions wrote Guinea off and issued alerts of “ethnic cleansing”. Cote d’Ivoire did not succeed as Guinea did and yet we must remain hopeful that a transition that respects the will of the people in Cote d’Ivoire will be upheld. On behalf of the Board, I urge you all to continue with the hard work and commitment of peacebuilding in 2011 with renewed energy and dedication. I wish all staff of WANEP at Regional and National levels, Happy New Year. God bless WANEP. God bless Africa.