

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2008]

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF PEACEBUILDING: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Ten years of continuous and uninterrupted service in the life of an organization is something worth celebrating, especially in a context where we have witnessed initiatives conceived today and die the next day. WANEP over the years has developed the capacity to manage a network of hundreds of organizations from different backgrounds, during which it went through a transition of leadership. As WANEP counts its achievements and the immense and unique contribution to peacebuilding in West Africa, there is every reason to hope for better and brighter years ahead.

The year 2008 was particularly challenging. WANEP sailed through a myriad of difficulties in sustaining itself as a result of funding exigencies. Permit me to acknowledge and thank the Government of Finland and CORDAID in particular for the financial support that kept the institutional fabric of the organisation alive. We must also recognize all donors, partners, friends of WANEP who supported the organisation financially, morally and in a big and small way because no contribution to peacebuilding is small. In the course of its ten year history, WANEP has undoubtedly distinguished itself as a strong and resilient network. There is therefore cause for celebration.

However, given the realities of our time, it is important not to sit on our laurels. The emerging challenges such as the global food crisis that hit Africa hard in 2008, the scramble for the world's dwindling natural resources, the credit crunch and the looming world economic depression, constitute a great threat and brings to fore the inherent risks associated with our largely interdependent world. The issues aforementioned have direct bearing on peace, human security and sustainable development in Africa as we acknowledge that the world has become a global village. From past experiences, there is justifiable fear that whenever Europe or America sneezes, Africa catches flu. We must begin to strategise how we would deal with these issues to ensure peacebuilding is still a priority for policy makers in 2009 and beyond.

The recurrent issues of human security, that is, putting the human person at the centre of our development drive and decision making cannot be over-emphasised. I am happy to note that WANEP's work in 2008 has been largely informed by this new perspective to peacebuilding,

thanks to ECOWARN early warning indicators developed in the framework of the partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). WANEP's medium and long term strategies and programmes should therefore seek to make a rapprochement between these human security challenges by seeking means to break even. This demands commitment, engagement and sustained support.

It has always puzzled me that the world has built military academies, war colleges, and created defence and security ministries with billions of dollars of budgetary allocations. Yet when it comes to peacebuilding, we have made a lot of rhetoric and lip service. It is time to build and invest in building and sustaining organizations and institutions, institutes and ministries working for peace. Eleanor Roosevelt affirmed: "It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at [achieving] it." International organisations and institutions, world economic powers, including emerging ones, must begin to set a new paradigm in investing in grassroots peacebuilding more than ever before. Our corporate and business world in Africa must begin to see themselves as peacebuilding partners and support indigenous institutions like WANEP.

I am consoled by the United States President elect Barack Obama's assurance in his victory speech when he promised to support all those working for peace and security. Yes, we can build a foundation for peaceful relations across Africa through organizations like WANEP. As my term comes to an end, let me take this unique opportunity to congratulate the Management and staff of WANEP for their professionalism, perseverance, dynamism and resolve to make peace a part of their life despite all the odds and challenges. I wish all the staff of WANEP and their families a Happy New Year 2009. May God bless WANEP; May God bless Africa.

Rev. Professor Emmanuel Anyambod Anya
Board Chairperson, WANEP
Rector, Protestant University of Cameroon