

[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2005]

I greet you all in the name of the Almighty God. The year 2005 has been very successful. West Africa as usual was in the limelight. This time around it was not news about devastating conflicts but an historic election in Liberia that produced Africa's first-ever female President, in the person of Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. As we celebrate this victory, we will continue to plough in more efforts towards achieving even greater results.

West Africa, through the Liberian people, demonstrated to the world its commitment to positive transformation. After 14 years of fighting in which tens of thousands of people were killed and many more displaced Liberia is on the path to peace.

Elections, when not fairly conducted, in most cases become a major source of conflict. I entreat countries in the sub-region to conduct free, fair and transparent elections as did Ghana in 2004 and Liberia recently. Credible elections are a sure route to genuine peace and meaningful development. We must pursue transparency and accountability to the fullest at all levels in our society.

WANEP through its networks has made and continues to make its modest contribution, in cooperative and collaborative ways, to the development of West Africa. With the completion of the restructuring process and the adoption of its strategic plan, the WANEP Regional Secretariat will continue to facilitate the transformation process.

May I take this opportunity to appreciate all the dedicated ladies and gentlemen, both at the national and regional secretariats for coordinating the efforts of member organizations. It was no surprise to me that the team leader, Emmanuel Bombande, the Executive Director, was honoured with two prestigious awards, including the Millennium Excellence Award for Peace in Ghana. My congratulations!!!

In the course of the year, WANEP led the West Africa delegation to participate in the Global Conference for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in New York. An action agenda agreed at the conference is already being implemented. This agenda must be pursued

strategically, especially where we already have challenges as in Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Togo, and also in places where the challenges are latent.

In 2005, our membership increased from 380 to 430 in 12 countries. This is quite laudable and significant. In the coming year, we shall explore the possibilities of establishing our physical presence in countries like Niger, Cape Verde and Mali. We do not wish to increase only in number but to be effective in serving our constituencies. We are the hope of West Africa.

I challenge all WANEP member organizations and partners alike to invest immensely in enhancing our human, technical, material and financial capacities to prevent violent conflicts and build peace in order to create an enabling environment for development.

We must brace ourselves for the challenges ahead!

I wish you all a Prosperous New Year 2006.

God bless you.

Rev Professor E.A. Anyambod
Board Chair, WANEP