



# Press Release

## **WANEP Urges Government, Civil Society Commitment to Sustainable Peace in West Africa**

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), held its 12th General Assembly (GA) on March 18- 20 at Menvic Grand Hotel, Accra - Ghana with delegates drawn from WANEP Regional and National Boards, WANEP regional and national staff. The GA was also attended by delegates from Governments, Development Partners including the UN System and members of the Diplomatic Corps, with the keynote address delivered by the Vice President, ECOWAS Commission; Dr. Toga Gayewea MCINTOSH on the theme *“The Place of National Architectures for Early Warning and Early Response in Strengthening the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.”*

The GA was officially opened by Madam Hanna Tetteh, Ghana’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, who is also on the ECOWAS Council of Ministers as well as Mediation and Security Council (Ministerial level). In her opening statement, Madam Tetteh called for active involvement and participation of CBOs in establishing national architectures for peace.

At the end of the General Assembly the delegates acknowledged profoundly the role of ECOWAS Commission and its Member States in promoting peace and stability in West Africa, as demonstrated in the political and military interventions in Mali and Guinea Bissau and the consolidation of peace and democracy in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ghana through peaceful elections. While applauding these giant strides, WANEP, notes with concern the continued threat to peace and security in the sub-region. The traditional threats of civil and border conflicts and crises of governance may have receded but they remain active. This is validated by the number of ECOWAS Member States currently facing various forms of instability and political crises. WANEP expresses concern over these issues and other emerging ones and wishes to draw attention to them for immediate and coordinated actions:

- The growing threat of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and Sahel region with Mali becoming the hub of terrorism and extremism activities.
- The perennial meddling of the military in politics in Guinea Bissau which has derailed the political process and continued to weaken National Institutions.
- The political deadlock replete with ethnic cleavages in Guinea that has stalled holding Legislative Elections.

- The slow progress of political and social reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire and the intermittent armed attacks in various parts of the country.
- The growing violent extremism, terrorism and religious fundamentalism in Nigeria and resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta region posing grave danger not only to the security of the country but to the whole region.
- The unresolved ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts with political undertones in Ghana, especially in the northern region.
- The upsurge in criminal activities such as piracy, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, especially women and children, drug trafficking and money laundering.

WANEP appreciates the contributions and commitments of Civil Society, Governments and Inter-governmental Agencies in dealing with these human security challenges in collaborative manner and urges ECOWAS Member States to develop viable infrastructures for peace and promote the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanism in resolving conflicts. WANEP further implore ECOWAS Member States to establish National Architectures for Early Warning and Early Response with full involvement of CSOs and ensure the integration of the system into the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism.

WANEP as the CSO implementing partner of the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) will continue to support ECOWAS and national governments in institutionalising conflict prevention in West Africa as vehicle for achieving stable peace, economic prosperity, development and regional integration.