

*[Extracted from WANEP Annual Report, 2007]*

### **Message from the Board Chair: A DECADE OF PEACEBUILDING: 1998-2008.**

In 1998, WANEP was formally launched as a network organization aimed at harnessing civil society and community-based peacebuilding efforts and initiatives in West Africa. This noble idea was borne out of the experience of a human disaster created by the mayhem of the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. One of the peculiarities of Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars was that victims were mostly children and women and the brutal hacking of limbs was a psychological wound that some survivors would live to remember.

These atrocities were committed mostly by the youthful combatants including child soldiers who were forcefully recruited by both the rebel and desperate government forces. Taking advantage of the structural weakness of the states, the rebellious and revolutionary syndrome was rapidly consuming the sub-region.

It was in this context that WANEP started its journey towards helping to build peace and stability in West Africa. Peacebuilding interventions in Sierra Leone, Northern Ghana, and Liberia rapidly imbued the organization and unlike other nascent structures, WANEP rapidly gained credibility and visibility in a phenomenal style. From an organization of few member organizations, WANEP now counts more than 460 member organizations ranging from community based structures to national coalitions, including well-known international NGOs. The message of WANEP remains unique and the same: we can only build effective peace through synergies, coalitions, partnerships and cooperation with one another. No one individual or organization can claim absolute ownership of successful peacebuilding. We cannot also do it without appropriate and strategic partnerships with governments and other relevant decision makers. WANEP understood this and entered into a strategic partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) West Africa Regional Program.

I am particularly delighted that in barely Ten Years, WANEP has proved beyond doubt that a people with a vision and determination can never perish. The accomplishments are legion and since peace work is not an event, but a continuum, the transformation of communities and mindsets over time may not be easily measured and appreciated now. The trained and

## **Chairperson's Message - 2007**

Written by WANEP

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capacitated pool of women peacebuilders and activists, the acquisition of skills and knowledge in conflict and human security early warning and early response, the search for just peace throughout the sub-region, expertise in mediation and reconciliation in communities, institutional capacity building are some of the areas that WANEP has made an enormous contribution. We thank our array of partners and donors who supported us in these endeavors. The irony of peace work and particularly conflict prevention is that when you succeed or contribute towards success, the world does not know and it is as if nothing happened.

Let me end by Congratulating WANEP staff and management for stemming the tides enormous challenges and remaining focused on the noble objectives for which the organization was created. As we celebrate Ten Years of Peacebuilding through networking and partnerships, we have every reason to hope for a better tomorrow. The Holy Book says, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. May God bless WANEP in 2008. Happy Anniversary.

***Rev Professor E.A. Anyambod***  
***Board Chair, WANEP***