I am pleased to join you for the opening ceremony of the 12th training session of the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI). My appreciation goes to the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre for this invitation.

On behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama and the good people of Ghana, I welcome all of you to WAPI and to our beautiful country. I am excited to know that there are about 55 participants from 25 countries across Africa and beyond at this event.

Commandant, in recent times, Africa has been confronted with severe peace and security challenges that have affected the smooth socio-economic development of the continent. The post-Arab spring and its attendant consequences currently confronting Egypt, elections disputes in Cote d’Ivoire that degenerated in 2010, labour unrest especially in West Africa and many more challenges continue to strain the smooth progress of the continent.
These challenges notwithstanding, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have to acknowledge and appreciate the fact that in recent times, there has been a significant paradigm shift towards conflict prevention and transformation with a strong emphasis on building infrastructures for peace. Ghana has taken the lead in this direction by establishing the National Peace Council whose mandate is to raise awareness on the use of non-violent strategies in response to conflict through networking, coordination and nationwide campaign.

By this, the Peace Council is expected to collaborate, support and work with other stakeholders and civil society organizations for the transformation of our society and for the entrenchment of peace and security in our societies.

That is why when institutions such as WANEP and KAIPTC with support from their partners design and implement such trainings to contribute to human resource capacity development in this field, I have to commend you for these consistent efforts to build peace in Africa through non-violent strategies.

Yes, we are aware of the many challenges in achieving peace and preventing conflict. But we are also encouraged and motivated about the fact that there is general consensus and goodwill for peace and justice to prevail at all times.

I appreciate the tremendous support of the international community, regional organisations and governments who continue to adopt multi-faceted strategies in addressing the complex nature of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes through partnerships with civil society.

It has become evident peace and security are no longer the sole responsibility of governments but it is the collective responsibility of all.
I therefore want to emphasize the need to enhance the interactions and collaboration between the regional bodies, governments and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

We in national governments appreciate the critical role that civil society continues to play in complementing the efforts of governments in ensuring peace and security.

I can tell you that in Ghana, we are privileged to have civil society organizations that have consistently contributed to the democratic governance of the country despite many institutional challenges they are confronted with. During elections for instance, in Ghana, I can categorically say that it is civil society organisations that have initiated dialogue and peace fora and campaigns, interparty dialogue fora, voter education and many other related activities that have gone a long way to have reduced tension and prevented violence that usually accompanied elections in Africa.

**Commandant, Ladies and Gentlemen**, at this 12th training session of WAPI, I would like on behalf of Government, to congratulate and commend the leadership of WANEP and KAIPTC for keeping faith and remaining focused in providing every year for the past 12 years, this unique platform and space for learning, experience sharing and cultural exchange.

I would like to commend WANEP, which I am informed has through the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute, trained over 400 peacebuilding and development practitioners from Africa and other parts of the world including the USA, Europe, Asia and the Middle East since 2002.

To end, I would like to encourage all participants to take this training seriously as it is a milestone in how you influence your society back home in the area of
peace and security and democratic governance. Ask the critical questions; learn more about Ghana and how she made it through the election disputes.

You are agents of change who after this training will certainly go back to your respective countries to make a difference.

On this note, I declare WAPI 2013 open.

I wish you all the best.
Thank you.