



WAYNFOCUS

West Africa Youth Network Newsletter

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This is our third issue of the WAYN Focus, the West Africa Youth Network and Focal Points newsletter. We encourage our partners and focal point contact to send in their articles and reports for publishing.

In this edition

- Its time to get Charles Taylor Face the SCSL
- healing the suffering
- Peace building in West Africa, progress and challenges
- News from Focal points
- Partner activities

We also ask that those who receive the Newsletter should copy them for distribution to their members. That way we can reach as many networks as possible more effectively. Our objective is to reach a really wide audience and therefore we appeal again to those readers, as well as concerned youth, to e-mail their contacts to wayn_ghana@yahoo.com or samabbey@africamail.com

We would of course appreciate cash support to enable us to mail more hard copies to readers. Needless to say we would welcome written contributions and also look forward to receiving any interesting archival material for the Network that is being set up as part of the transformational process

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You can now send your comments, reactions and enquiries to the address below: wayn_ghana@yahoo.com

News from the Regional Directoracte

It is Time To Bring War Criminal -Charles Taylor to Justice

The pressure is mounting on Taylor; it is time to turn him over to the Court

Peace is something that may never be completely actualized in world affairs. Human history is a record of its elusiveness. However, it is in our common interest to recognize that peace remains a goal to constantly strive for, a condition to be sought after, and an ideal to be approximated. Yet, with all of humanity's failed to attempts to bring peace about, peace may seem to be virtually unobtainable or confined to the realm of abstraction. However, despite the disappointments and setbacks, we can at least recognize within ourselves the undeniable feeling that we have a responsibility as citizens of the world to strive toward realizing peace.

WE, the youth of Africa, are calling on our Governments to ask Nigeria to immediately turn over the former Liberian President to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). The SCSL has indicted Taylor for his role in committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law during the war in Sierra Leone in the late 1990's.

In August 2003, Nigeria, in consultation with other world powers, agreed to accept Charles Taylor on its territory. This good-faith agreement removed Taylor from Liberia and allowed the Liberian peace process to start. Taylor went to Nigeria on the condition that he no longer be involved in Liberian or West African affairs, and that he no longer speak to the media.

From the beginning of his stay in Nigeria, Charles Taylor has broken his word to Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, by speaking to the media, maintaining day-to-day involvement in Liberian politics, and seeking to destabilise West Africa.

Because Taylor remains involved in Liberian politics, it is particularly important that he be transferred to Freetown for a fair trial before elections in Liberia this October. Nigeria accepted Taylor in the interests of Liberian peace. Now, the interests of Liberian peace demand that he immediately be sent for trial to Freetown.

"Taylor was responsible for mass carnage in Sierra Leone. There have been numerous reports of his violations of the terms of his asylum; he should be turned over and have to face the Court," U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA-40).

The SCSL has indicted Taylor on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity based on his role in directly supporting the actions of the rebel Revolutionary United Front, which include widespread and systematic attacks upon the civilian population of Sierra Leone. The charges against Taylor include terrorizing civilians, mass murder, rape, abduction, forced labor, and cutting off of limbs.

The international community cannot allow Taylor to evade responsibility for his unconscionable actions. The Court was established to bring those who bear the greatest responsibility to justice; Charles Taylor undoubtedly bears the greatest responsibility

We invite you to join hands with youth of Africa and the Special Court for Sierra Leone and other leading global peace personalities to sign a petition to our Governments to ask Nigeria to turn over the former Liberian President Mr. Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)

With my signature I endorse the immediate transfer of Charles Taylor to the SCSL.....

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE
WEST AFRICAN YOUTH PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON NEPAD
5-8 April, 2005
HILL VALLEY HOTEL, SIGNAL HILL, FREETOWN, SIERRA
LEONE**

**By Dr. Nana Tanko, Executive Director
Open Society Initiative For West Africa**

West Africa has had a long history of old spaces that allowed interaction of the peoples, not as tribes and ethnic groups, but as kingdoms and empires that cut across modern boundaries. It has been vibrant with this engagement in small and medium scale enterprises across its vast land and peoples. There has been wide development of external trade, active participation of the people including women. The sub-region has since the centuries suffered revendishly from the challenges of slave trade, across the Sahara and Atlantic, followed by its frequently across various religions with the participation of Africa and Colonialization.

Today, under the auspices of sub-regional integration, we all have a chance to play a meaningful role of recreating the borderless livelihood of our fathers. It is in this light that I commend the initiative of the West African Youth in setting up the West African Youth Parliament. I see it as a forum not only for integration, but for building up a new crop of leadership to head the sub-region and ensure the institution of Good Governance and the Rule of Law.

The independent states of West Africa have over the last thirty years been faced with various problems and challenges with regards to the emergence of truly independent states and governorship structures that are representative and sensitive to meeting the needs of the citizenry. There is currently a state of apathy and non-respect for the mechanism of the state, as an instrument of development, protections of rights and of ensuring the rule of law. The last three decades have been marked by the general take over of various government instituted by the colonial masters with authoritarian regimes that lack respect for the rule of law and have generally failed to consolidate the development of institutions and structures of governance that will ensure the emergence of democracies in the sub-region. The interest of most of these regimes have revolved around personal greed and mis-use of public resources, the exploitation of the vast majority of the poor which have subsequently led to the promotion of ethnic and religious politics as tools for further exploitation of the masses. These have resulted in the proliferation of ethnic, communal and religious conflicts in the sub-region that have further developed into various forms of warfare, further devastating the existing means of livelihood of the people, displacement of the rural populace and a movement towards anarchy and the emergence of dictatorial and military regimes and governments. In countries where efforts have been made towards the institution of democratically elected governments these have been manned by mis-use of the ballot box resulting from electoral fraud often leading to a justification for military intervention in politics. Countries like Nigeria, had to face a cessation crisis that resulted into a civil war less than five years after independence, Ghana and Mali had all experience military interventions in politics at various times in their history. The most recent challenges have been the Manor River countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia, with others such as Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau with instituted dictatorial regimes. The result of all these have been a sub-region facing decades of wars and the proliferation of conflicts given the porous nature of most borders. Sub-regional and regional institutions such as ECOWAS and the Organisation of African Unity, most recently the African Union, have all had to face the challenges of creating an environment of peaceful co-existence and the institution of the rule of law and respect for human rights, but were generally crippled by the existing hostile political, economic and social environment in West Africa, existing amidst increased underdevelopment of the people revealed through the rising levels of poverty and the general marginalization of the sub-region in the international arena. The result of all these is a sub-region that has been characterized by weak governmental institutions, institutional graft, autocratic tendencies, weak civil society capacity and worsening poverty and ignorance for the majority, non respect for the rule of law, isolation from the

international arena resulting from lack of technological capacity for communication and development, as well as, unopened media spaces. These have all made governments in the sub-regional dysfunctional and unable to handle development challenges such as poverty and its attendant consequences such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Meanwhile, West African economies continue to be dominated by global financial markets, trans-national corporations and other private entities through the unrestricted mobility of finance capital, labour restrictions and unprecedented development of attitude forming information and communication technology. Besides the internal challenges, West Africa has had to contend with externally instigated corruption, cheap exploitation of natural resources, unequal trade relations, restricted access to global markets and environmental degradation. There is general lack of access to justice for the ordinary individual, and most countries are struggling to observe the rule of law and due process in the administration of justice. The exploitation of children women and other vulnerable groups, as well as, various human rights abuses resulting from wars and conflicts in the sub-region, still persist.

With a population in the region of 200-250 million, West Africa comprises the largest sub-region (in terms of population) in Africa. It goes without saying therefore that the sub-region will have the chunk of the continent's problems as well. Of the fifteen countries which fall within West African sub-region, only Senegal and Cape Verde have not experienced coups or civil unrest¹. The region can therefore be rightfully branded as an oasis of instability. Over the past decade however, attempts (unwilling in some cases) have been made by governments of the sub-region to mend their ways, consequently democracies are slowly emerging across the sub-region. Regular elections are held and governments seem to be working in tandem with the legislature and the judiciary. Practically however, the structures of governance are very delicate and in many cases countries seem to be sitting on a time bomb waiting to explode. Leaders do not want to yield over power, or if they do, it is to cronies and family members. The legislature is usually a collection of parties loyal to government and is nothing more than an extension of the party machinery. The judiciary, even though comprises professionals, is not independent, either out of fear or for economic considerations. The military is still very much alive and resents any change which is likely to diminish its political and economic influence. The net result is a region full of corrupt and heartless dictators. Civil society seems hapless in the face of all these; praying for divine intervention as it were.

Specific instances of this negative situation are enumerated herein below. President Abdulai Wade of Senegal incurred the displeasure of the world when his government was reported to have arrested and detained a journalist for reporting a news item which was critical of the government. News of government high-handedness in dealing with dissent makes headlines in Nigeria occasionally. President Obasanjo was reported to have unilaterally granted a loan totalling some \$ 45million to two neighbouring countries without recourse to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The country is now plagued with a lot of cases of corruption at the highest level of governance including the Executive Council, members of the legislature and the Police. In Banjul, a journalist who was a known critic of the Government of President Yaya Jammeh was gunned down in cold blood and the culprits are yet to be apprehended or brought to justice for that matter. Prisons in the sub-region are chocked with detainees without trial; the judicial and legal structures in some jurisdictions are used as tools of oppression by the state.

The experience of these countries can also be cited. Togo currently is one of the greatest challenges in the sub-region. It was the first country south of the Sahara to experience a coup d'etat after independence. The country saw dictatorship under Eyadema for some 38 years until his death in February of this year. Togo was until the death of President Eyadema, a no-go area for many human rights groups. The press was dominated and ruled by the government and the opposition was barred from active participation in active politics. Vibrant opposition leaders were executed, detained or expelled into exile. The only semblance of a constitution was

couched to favour the late president and his cronies. On his death, the military which is comprised predominantly of his Kabre ethnic group set the constitution aside and swore in his son Faure Nyasingbe as successor, to "complete his father's term". Luckily though, with persistent pressure from the international community the son-successor stepped down and general elections are due to be held in April of this year. With the creation of this opportunity there is need for the West African Youth Parliament to join other well meaning institutions to pay close attention to developments in Togo. The socio-political situation in the country remains fragile and unpredictable; the stakes are very high for the forthcoming elections; whichever way it goes; either for the late President's Kabre-dominated party or Ewe-dominated opposition, the country has the potential of exploding into civil strife. **There is the urgent need to assist with the establishment and strengthening of the structures of governance, namely the executive, legislature and the judiciary. There is also the need to incapacitate civil society groups to serve as watchdogs of the government. Citizens must be educated on their basic human rights. There is generally the need build all structures of governance, human rights and access to justice from scratch.**

In Burkina Faso, since independence the country has experienced some of the most violent moments in the history of the sub-region. Notable among them were the gruesome assassinations of President Thomas Sankara and journalist Norbert Zongo. The former was killed in the wake of the coup which brought the current President into power and the latter was mysteriously killed in December of 1998. The truth surrounding the deaths of these two gentlemen as well as several others, foreign nationals is yet to be completely told. There are other stories of state employees, (some 500 police officers, among others) being summarily dismissed for daring to call the government to order on some trivial issues. The latest issue at hand which has set the government and civil society on a collision course is the interpretation of Article 37 of the national Constitution, on the Presidential term of office. President Compaore and his supporters insist that the President is eligible to stand for a third term in office; whereas the opposition with support from civil society insist that Article 37 bars him from doing so. General elections are due in 2005, the West Africa Youth Parliament needs to move in participating in this area, and begin to plan to play a key interventionist role.

Senegal remains an oasis of peace in the midst of all the conflicts surrounding it². The Casamance conflict has been contained but the several years of conflict has opened the region to all forms of human rights violations, perpetrated mainly by the rebels and their remnants. There is generally little evidence of state-sponsored human rights violations as pertains elsewhere in the region. Problems plaguing the country are weak legal and judicial structures and a lack of general awareness of rights. There is also the big issue of street children, which the state appears powerless to resolve. Civil society organizations played a key part in the institution of the current government. It is therefore noteworthy that they mentor the process of governance in the country; here the Youth Parliament can also play a key role.

Guinea Conakry is one of the countries which constitute the Mano River Union; the other two being Sierra Leone and Liberia. These countries together with Cote d'Ivoire constitute what OSISA terms the conflict area of the sub-region. Even though Guinea has not seen active civil war since independence from France in 1958, it has been largely unstable, particularly after the death of its first President, Sekou Toure. This instability has been aided largely by problems in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Frontiers of the country bordering these three countries are choked with recruits who saw active service in the conflicts in these countries. Sadly however, not much attention has been paid by the international community to the situation. Thus whereas disarmament is going on in the surrounding countries, trained mercenaries are left roaming the streets and tend to harass civilians every now and then. On the political front, President Lansana Conte, together with Compaore of Burkina Faso are probably the most ruthless leaders in West Africa at the moment. Tramped up charges are brought against anybody who dares to oppose him. The detention and resignation respectively of Sidya Touré and Lonsény Fall, each of whom served as Prime Minister, are

two examples of President Conte's highhandedness. In January of 2005 a number of military men were arrested and detained on charges of an attempted coup. The human situation in the country was summed up by the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues in its recent report as follows: "Even though the country's constitution guarantees the fundamental rights to all its citizens, President Lansana Conté's regime, which came to power after a coup d'état in 1984, has changed Guinea's political and social life into a mockery of democracy, in which rights and freedoms stipulated in the constitution are violated." In spite of the difficult terrain, Conakry is calm and the structures of governance appear to be functional. The ongoing reform process in the country should guide the interests of organizations such as the Youth Parliament.

In Sierra Leone, as part of its transition from civil war, a number of structures were put in place with support from the international community to heal the wounds of the war. Notable among them were the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court. The TRC has wound up its proceedings and trials are on going at the Special Court. There are plans to establish a body, probably a National Human Rights Commission to see to the implementation and enforcement of the findings and recommendations for the TRC. There is a Law Reform Commission which is the state agency responsible for the legislative reform. The Police Service is being rebuilt, with the establishment of the Family Support Unit to assist in resolving complaints of violence against women and children. Over 29,000 combatants as well as some 3000 child soldiers have so far been disarmed and a large number of the same reintegrated into civil society. Numerous human rights organisations are active in the country, including the Campaign for Good Governance, the Forum of Conscience and Network Movement for Peace and Justice. Some 33 of these associations are members of a coalition called National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR), whose main objective is to advise the member organisations and co-ordinate their actions. The restoration of State authority in formerly inaccessible regions enables the human rights groups to launch their actions outside the capital, Freetown, there should be sustained and complemented by the efforts of the West Africa Youth Parliament.

In the light of these developments, one may conclude that we in West Africa go through the motion of opening our societies up just to please the world and our critics. It is heartwarming to note however that there are some genuine positive developments in the sub-region and with time democracy and the rule of law shall be entrenched. There has been relative peace, and which peace has come with a rise in human rights activism; civil society groups are becoming more proactive in asserting basic human rights and governments appear to be responding positively to the new trend.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), other sub-regional institutions and organised civil society bodies are increasingly playing a positive strategic interventionist role in the process of upholding democracy and the rule of law. Their efforts are given further impetus by such regional initiatives as NEPAD, the Constitutive Act of the African Union and ECOWAS protocols.

Currently, the most active institutional shelf of the ECOWAS is the Authority of the Heads of State and Parliament, the Community Parliament is yet to perform the need strategic role of law making in the sub-region. I would like to conclude by appealing to all relevant stakeholders to support the West Africa Youth Parliament by arming them with adequate capacity and support to compliment the effort of the Community Parliament. This has become increasingly vital given the increasing strategic need of ensuring good governance, the rule of law and respect for Human Rights in West Africa.

WAYN Opinion

THE HEALING OF SUFFERING

By Sammy Jacobs Abbey, WAYN Liaison officer to ECOWAS

If you have come to listen to an advocator who it is thought transmits wisdom, you have mistaken your way, for true wisdom is not communicated through books or speeches-true wisdom is found in the depths of your consciousness, just as true love is found in the depths of your heart.

You are listening to somebody who does not know the laws that rule the universe, who is not privy to the laws of history, who is ignorant of the relationship that governs the people of the world, all that I'm about doing is addressing myself to your conscience. Over the cities and villages where each day is a struggle, a hope cut short by death, where love is followed by hate, where forgiveness is followed by revenge: over the cities of the people rich and poor; over the immense fields of humanity, a mantle of suffering and sorrow has fallen. You suffer when pain bites your body, you suffer when hunger seizes your body, but you suffer not only from your body's immediate pain and hunger- you also suffer from consequence of the diseases that afflict it.

There are suffering that occurs during illness and that recedes with the advance of science, just as hunger can recede if the empire of justice advance. There are also the suffering that does not depends on the sickness of your body but yet derives from that sickness: if you are disabled, if you cannot see, if you cannot hear, you suffer, but though such suffering derives from your body or from the disease of your body, that suffering is of your mind.

There is yet another kind of suffering that does not recede even with the advance of science or with advance of justice. This type of suffering which belongs strictly to your mind retreats before faith, before joy in life, before love, you must exist in your own consciousness. You suffer because of you fear losing what you have, or because of what you have already lost or because of what you lack, or because you fear in general.

These, then are the great enemies of humanity, fear of sickness, fear of poverty, fear of death, fear of loneliness, all of these forms of suffering pertain in your mind, and all of them reveal your inner violence, the violence that is in your mind. Notice how that violence always stems from desire. The more violent a person is, the more gross that person desires

The aphorism, "As a man thinking in his heart, so is he," not only embraces the whole of a man's being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts

A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will bring forth. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weed-seeds will fall therein, and will continue to produce their kind.

Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits which he requires so may a man tend the garden of ; his mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless and impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful and pure thoughts. By pursuing this process, a man sooner or later discovers that he is the master- gardener of his soul, the director of his life. He also reveals, within himself, the flaws of thought, and understands, with ever- increasing accuracy, how the thought-forces and mind elements operate in the shaping of character, circumstances, and destiny.

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves; they therefore remain bound. The man who does not shrink from self-crucifixion can never fail to accomplish the object upon which his heart is set. This is as true of earthly as of heavenly things. Even the man whose sole object is to acquire wealth must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before he can accomplish his object; and how much more so he who would realize a strong and well-poised life?

I will like to tell you a story that took place long ago. There was once a traveler who had to undertake a long journey. He yoked his animal to a cart and began the journey to his faraway destination, a journey

he had to complete within a certain length of time. He called the animal necessity and the cart desire; one wheel of the cart he call pleasure and the other he called pain our traveler turned his cart sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, yet he never ceased moving towards his destiny. The faster the cart traveled, the faster turn the wheels of pleasure and pain, carrying as they did the cart of desire and connected as they were by same axle . But the journey was very long, and after a time our traveler grew bored. So he decided to decorate his cart, and he begun to adorn it with all manner of beautiful things. But the more he embellished the cart of Desire with these ornaments, the heavier became the load for Necessity to pull. On the curves and steep hills of the road, the poor animal grew too exhausted to pull the cart of Desire. And when the road was soft, the wheels of pleasure and suffering became mired in the earth.

One day, because the road was long and he was still very far from his destination, our traveler grew desperate. That night he decided to mediate on the problem, and in the midst of his mediation he heard the neighing of his old friend, Necessity, comprehending the message, he arose very early the next morning and began to lighten the cart of its burden, striping it of all its fine adornments. Then he set off once more toward his destination with the animal Necessity pulling the cart at a brisk trot. Still our traveler had already lost much time- time that as now irrecoverable. The next night he sat down again to mediate, and he realized, thanks to another message from his old friend, that now he had to undertake a task that was doubly difficult because it involves his letting go. At daybreak he sacrifices the cart of Desire. It is true that when he did so he lost the whole of pleasure, but then he also lost the wheel of suffering and so abandoning the cart of Desire, he mounted the animal called Necessity and galloped on its back across the greed fields until he reached his destiny.

See how desire can trap you. But notice that there are desires of different qualities. Elevate desire, purify, desire and in so doing you will become free of the wheel of suffering.

Spurred by desire, the violence in a person does not simply remain like a sickness in the consciousness of that person- it acts in the world of other people and is exercised upon them. And do not think that when I talk of violence I am speaking only about the armed act of war, where some mend destroy others. That is only one form of physical violence.

There is also economic violence. Economic Violence is the violence through which you exploit other people; economic violence occurs when you steal from another. When you are no longer a brother or sister to others but a bird of prey feeding upon them

There is also a racial violence or do you think that you are not being violent when you persecute someone because that person is not of your own race? Do you think that you are not engaging in violence when you malign that person for being of a race different from you own?

And there is religious violence: Do you think that you are not engaging in violence when you refuse work to. Close your doors to or dismiss a person because that person does not share your religious belief? Do you believe that it is not violence when you use words of hate to build walls around other people, excluding them from your society, because they do not share your religious beliefs- isolating them within their families, segregating them and their loved ones, because they do not share your religion?

Only inner faith and inner mediation can end the violence in you, in others and in the world around you. This world is on the verge of exploding with no way to end the violence! Do not choose false doors. There are no politics that can solve this mad urge for violence. There is no political party or movement on the planet that can end the violence. Do not choose false doors that promise to lead away from the violence in the world..... I have heard that all over the world young people are turning to false doors to try to escape the violence and inner suffering. They turn to drugs as a solution. Do not chose false doors to try to end the violence.

By fellow Africans, keep these simple commandments, as simple as these rocks, this snow and this sum that bless us. Carry peace within you and carry it to others. My brother, my sister- if you look back to history, you will see the human being bearing the face of suffering. Remember, even as you gaze at that suffering face, that it is necessary to move forward, and it is necessary to learn to laugh and it is necessary to love.

Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into act, and bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit. To you, my brother and sisters, I cast this hope- this hope of joy, this hope of love- so that you elevate your heart and elevate your spirit, and so that you do not forget to elevate your body.

PEACEBUILDING IN WEST AFRICA, PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

By Memunatu Pratt (Mrs)
Head, Peace and Conflict Studies

THEME: WEST AFRICAN YOUTH PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON NEPAD Opening

Distinguished Guests, Honourable Members of Parliament, The Chairperson and Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, The Director of the West African Youth Network, participants from West Africa, Ladies and Gentleman. Let me take this opportunity of thanking the organizers for according me this principle conditions and noble but distinguished role of making a presentation at this august body of the West African Youth Parliamentary Forum on NEPAD. My presentation will focus firstly on NEPAD as a strategy for good governance, peace and security, secondly conflicts in West Africa, thirdly peace building and the culture of peace and finally progress and challenges and the role of youths.

NEPAD as a strategy for good governance, peace and security

NEPAD, commonly defined as the new vision for the development of Africa, based on the integration of the continent and partnership between Africa and Developed countries has as its priorities, Political good governance, good economic governance, infrastructure and education. Specifically, NEPAD's goals include the establishment of good governance. This is a fundamental strategy for the success of development. It is especially important in the light of the fact that NEPAD's Development project is designed from a partnership perspective. In order to mobilize internal partners and create lasting relationships with external partners, Africa needs to reassure the legal, social and political conditions that will preserve mutual interest of the partners involve in its development.

However, the issue of governance can be addressed in many different ways, often depending on the conception underlying the concepts of good governance and development, whose principles and purposes should put the people first. This leads us to reflect on what good governance is and what are the principle condition and mechanisms of good governance, which is necessary for the successful implementation of NEPAD for the benefit of the Africans.

The Prime Minister of the UK the RT Honourable Mr. Tony Blair recently re-echoed this in the just lunched Africa Commission Report with the following as its focus:

"Building effective state, governance, and nations, establishing peace and security, promoting Human Development, Accelerating Growth and Poverty Reduction, Breaking into World Market, financial and supporting Africa's Resurgence, Delivering and Implementing global Partnership around African Leadership'

According to the World Bank which has contributed to making good governance an eligibility criterion for substantive financing of government policies, the concept refers to the way economic social resources of the country are managed to support its development. Good governance apparently combines a requirement of democracy with sound management of public affairs. NEPAD as an African Strategy for ensuring sustainable development in the 21st Century has identified the basic conditions necessary to achieve this end, amongst others, the need for peace, security, democracy and political governance initiatives.

CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA

The spread of conflicts in Africa is therefore a major challenge to NEPAD's vision of peace, security and governance in Africa. Conflict is natural. It is an evitable fact of life. It is found in all societies and communities at all stages of development. It occurs when ever people are confronted with perceived or real clashing interests, goals and values, or competing claims over scarce resources. Conflicts in West Africa are highly integrated with violence in the region becoming more frequently since the end of the cold war. With the exception of Nigeria, conflicts in the region are not interstate, not they truly intra-state, they are wide spread with sub regional character. While most of them originate in one country, they involve cross-border activities that engulf other communities.

Root causes of these conflicts include the legacy of direct and indirect colonialism. The Taylor factor in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the unfinished business of nation state building and post-independent authoritarian government, which continue to violate human rights with impunity.

Additionally, there is a deep corruption, uneven distribution of wealth, militariliasation of state and an atmosphere of political exclusion based on religion and ethnicity. High unemployment, the proliferations of valuable minerals, particularly the illegal exploration of diamonds in Sierra Leone have combined to make conflicts worse. High levels of poverty and marginalization among the population have provided feeble conditions for conflict in the zone. One of the off shoot of these conflicts is the misuse of youths by political pundits as a vehicle for access to power and resource. Scholars have described this factor as the lumen culture especially in the case of Sierra Leone.

One of the major challenges of states in West Africa is to develop effective approaches to managing social, political, economic and ethnic conflicts. Managing competing interests and potential conflict in society is an integral part of statehood and sustainable peace. Another challenge of states is to have adequate capacity to integrate conflict management into routine practice of government. This involves the tasks of developing committed governmental and civil society leaders as well as democratic institutional structure at the national, regional and international levels. It also calls for fair judicial and other dispute resolution processes and effective conflict management procedure to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. This emphasis Peace Building in West Africa as a daunting task.

Peace Building in West Africa

In his supplement to Agenda for Peace (1995), the then Secretary General of the UN defined peace building as "comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. Boutrous Ghali views peace building as inextricably linked to conflict prevention. Whilst preventive diplomacy is aimed at avoiding the outbreak of violence, "post conflict peace building is to prevent a recurrence."

In this regard, peace building encompasses "demilitarisation, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reforms and economic reforms. Peace building has also been synonymous with reconciliation. Cooperation among parties to the conflict attempting to build better relations, the rebuilding of institutions of civil society, democratisation as its primary goal.

In general terms, three elements are central to the concept of peace building; these are rehabilitation and reconciliation of societies that have suffered the ravages of armed conflict, secondly, the creation of the security related political and/or socio-economic mechanism needed to build trust between the parties and prevent resumption of violence and thirdly an external foreign intervention (national, multi-lateral or UN) to help create conditions conducive to peace. Beyond these are several debates surrounding the meaning and practice of peace-building.

Progress on Peace building in West Africa

In West Africa progress peace building has been varied and diverse and these are directly linked to, addressing the root causes of conflict- political, social, economic, rehabilitation and reintegration, addressing peace and justice-transitional justice, human right, reform and review of constitutions, election monitoring, reform of the security sector. Legislative and judiciary, enhancing the role of civil society and the media, promoting partnerships between the government and stakeholders, etc. The success of these has largely differed by country specific experiences of conflict, culture, political practice and the role of external actors in defining when and how to support peace building.

A culture of peace consists of values, attitudes, behaviour and way of life based on non-violence and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms of every person. In a culture of peace, power grows not from the barrel of the gun but from participation, dialogue and cooperation. It rejects violence in all of its form including war and the culture of war. In place of domination and exploitation by the strong over the weak, the culture of peace respects the rights of everyone economic as well as political. It represents a caring society which protects the rights of those who are weak such as handicapped, children and the socially disadvantaged.

In a culture of peace, people assume a global human identity, such as gender, family, community, ethnic group or nationality. The full participation and involvement of all is essential to the development of a culture of peace. It is essential that all groups be involved. A culture of peace cannot be imposed from outside. It is a process that grows out of the belief and actions of the people themselves and develops differently in each country and region, depending on its history.

Seemingly, peace-building efforts in West Africa have been practiced as a fire brigade approach that only comes after any conflict characterized by violence. The use of conflict prevention and early earning has been largely ineffective. Some of these setbacks have been the lack of resources, the lack of political commitment, absence of policies and programmes to enhance conflict prevention and peace building coupled with negative attitude and practice of bad citizenship. For successful process of peace building to progress in West Africa, a coordinated approach of embarking on peace building in the pre, crisis and post-crisis should be designed. This will respond to inevitable challenges, which are inherent as a result of the socio-economic indicators of peace and security in Africa. Peace building practice should be built on sound democratic practice of good governance and democratisation. Efforts by political leaders to refrain and prevent corruption, promote transparency, implement sound economic policies, respect human rights, embark and accept democratic reforms, work towards creating and improving on the economic status of its citizens, be ready to provide space to be voted for or against will be the cornerstone of progress in peace building in West Africa.

Role of Youths in Peace building in West Africa

Youths also in the sub region will contribute to this process by, publicizing and promoting campaigns like the culture of peace, cooperate with other civil society organizations to lobby, organize training programmes, collect peace education materials, involve in conflict resolution as mediators, negotiators, involve in peer counselling and trauma healing, call radio talk show, lobby government and educational officials on decision about inclusion of new curriculum in schools and build coalitions and influence existing policies and international commitment. These carve out the unique role of young people in Peace building towards achieving NEPAD's vision of peace and security.

Challenges

These peace building strategies have posed challenges at all levels, they are both internal and external in strengthening or weakening the peace building in West Africa, these include donor fatigue, lack of

trust, corruption and mismanagement, lack of transparent power sharing strategies, nepotism, tribalism, weak governance infrastructure, lack of basic social service, high inflation, elitist political process based on group interest, high unemployment, high government debt, the type of reintegration support for specific target groups such as ex-combatants, technical assistance and capacity building for key institutions in the peace process and long term conflict prevention.

Conclusion

In conclusion NEPAD through an effective and designed approach on peace building and security should contribute to the emergence and establishment of an operational executive authority at regional level. Its success depends on initiatives aimed at suppressing conflicts in the interest of Africa.

Focal Point News



The Gambia

WAYN Gambia country coordinator Mr. Abdul Jobe, recently paid a working visit to Senegal where he had bilateral talks with WAYN Senegal* wayn_gambia@yahoo.co.uk



WAYN Togo

Mr. Andrea Afanou WAYN Togo coordinator who is also the coordinator of the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Action Group, is developing a module for ECOWAS tour by the action group members * wayn_togo@yahoo.fr



WAYN LIBERIA

WAYN Liberia coordinator Hon. Arthur Becker, the 1st Deputy Speaker of the MRU Youth Parliament was recently active in the just ended registration of electorates in Liberia pending the October presidential election. * unlib@yahoo.com



WAYN GHANA

WAYN Ghana coordinator Mr. Sammy Jacobs Abbey is currently collating conceptual papers from all WAYN focal points to enable him come out with a document on National Youth Parliamentary forum in all WAYN member countries, WAYN Ghana is also leading the campaign on advocacy to get Charles Taylor face the SCSL* wayn_ghana@yahoo.com



WAYN Guinea

WAYN Guinea is playing active role in the facilitation of the 2nd MRU Youth Parliament to be held in Liberia. Rt. Hon. Toure who is the honorable speaker of the MRU Youth Parliament is already preparing to leave to Liberia to join the WAYN team there! * wayn_guinea@yahoo.fr



WAYN Sierra Leone

WAYN Sierra Leone continue to focus on the forth coming Youth Leadership training at the University of Sierra Leone this September, the WAYN Regional director who is also the head of the WAYN Sierra Leone recently joined our focal point in Mali for a UNICEF Children meeting* wayn_sierraleone@yahoo.com



WAYN Nigeria

WAYN Nigeria coordinator Mr. Adeola will be joining the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Group together with the Hon. AbdulAzeez Idris King during the group visit to ECOWAS Secretariat* waynnigeria@yahoo.co.uk



WAYN Senegal

wayn_senegal@yahoo.fr



WAYN NIGER

Amina Mustapha a youth representative of the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Action Group continue to make moves to have a meeting with President of Niger meanwhile she is working closely with towards the facilitation of our ECOWAS Tour* iro_mustapha@yahoo.fr



WAYN Ivory Coast

Youths from Liberia Guinea Togo Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast are planning to organize a Special Session on Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Ivory Coast: The meeting is being coordinated by the Secretariat of WAYN and seek to infuse a youth approach in the Ivorian Peace Process. It will be climaxed by a Peace Caravan from Abidjan through principal cities and towns* wayn_ci@yahoo.fr



WAYN Mali



WAYN Burkina Faso

WAYN Burkina Faso is currently been overseen by WAYN Togo, meanwhile Hon. Mme Aissata SIDIBE, Member of Parliament from Burkina Faso who is also a member of the West Africa Youth Parliamentary Action Group is joining the action group during the ECOWAS visit



WAYN Cape Verde

WAYN Liaison officer to ECOWAS is working very hard to establish a WAYN office in Cape Verde by the end of July 2005



WAYN Guinea Bissau

The WAYN Regional Director and the WAYN Liaison officer to ECOWAS are working to have WAYN Guinea Bissau establish.



WAYN Benin

WAYN Benin coordinator, Mr. Spero Hector is currently among the 14 member Africa Network of Young Peace-builders carrying out research for the strengthening of the ANYP* wayn_benin@yahoo.fr

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) would like to announce the start of admissions to the West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) for 2005.

This year's Institute will be held from **September 5 – 23, 2005 at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)** in Accra, Ghana.

WAPI is a three-week intensive training program that aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society-based Peacebuilding practitioners and institutions across the sub-region in order to promote the development of indigenous responses to conflict.

Six courses will be offered during the three week period, each week having two 5-day intensive courses running concurrently. The courses are highly interactive and participatory, blending theory and practice in the field of Peacebuilding.

WAYN PARTICPATE IN REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON CHILD SOLDIERS

The Regional Director of the West African Youth Network, Richelieu Allison was recently in Bamako, Mali where he participated in the West and Central Africa Regional Consultation on Violence against Children. The programme, which was held at the Palace De Congress in Bamako, brought together more than 250 participants representing various stakeholders. It was organized by the United Nations Children Fund and the Secretariat of the Independent Expert appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Several key recommendations were adopted at the end of the consultations. The Regional Secretariat is presently working on a concept paper that will allow it to become more involved in the global camping to eliminate violence against children.

First West African Youth Leadership Programme on Track

Modalities for the commencement of the First annual West African Youth Leadership Programme are presently been put into place by the Regional Secretariat. A Consultation was held recently with authorities of the Center for Peace Studies of the University of Sierra Leone to review the Memorandum of Understanding between WAYN and the centre. The consultation also provided an opportunity for a revision of the training modules of the programme. The decision to organize such a training initiative has been hailed in many quarters. WAYN Is presently seeking funding from Cord aid of The

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Netherlands.

West Africa Peacebuilding Institute (WAPI) 2005