

Members of the High table, former CHRAJ Commissioner, Justice Emile Short, distinguished participants, dear colleagues from WACSI, KAIPTC, and GIZ, all protocol observed,

Please accept a warm welcome also on behalf of the GIZ.

I am happy to see a few familiar faces around the tables, which I take as a reflection of our joint success in building an ever growing, informal network of institutions and concerned individuals engaged with conflict prevention and peaceful development of the sub-region.

I think it was about a year ago that WACSI took the initiative to approach us again with a number of exciting ideas for collaboration. After a few more meetings and many more e-mails, we decided to get real – I think it was about two months ago – and come together for this important training activity.

As some of you will know, one of the objectives of GIZ's engagement at KAIPTC is to support the work of the Center in its collaboration with ECOWAS, other TCEs and regional civil society actors in an effort to develop the civilian dimension of Peace Support Operations.

That is why, in much of our development work, we focus on issues of conflict prevention and post conflict reconstruction – two key elements embedded in the RtoP norm.

This is also the reason why we have previously supported the collaboration between WACSI and KAIPTC that led to the development of a resource manual of conflict prevention, which I believe is still being used in training courses throughout the sub-region.

We all know that civilians, particular women and children, account for the vast majority of population groups adversely affected by violent conflicts.

The international community and Human Rights activists are rightly concerned especially with those violent conflicts that have lead to genocide, ethnic cleansing or other crime against humanity.

Having said this, it is important to stress that the effective cooperation between civilian and uniformed actors, civil society, national and international

institutions is very important, if we want to prevent the occurrence of such mass atrocities. This is true not just during peace support operations, which are important operational forms of conflict prevention that remain relevant for West Africa.

However, I believe it is necessary that we move beyond operational prevention, as many of the root causes of violent conflicts in the region are structural in nature and a reflection of the socio-economic inequalities, the violation of fundamental rights and the exclusion of large segments of society.

In order to address some of these challenges, we need strong civil society advocacy. Also, we have to forge active collaboration and strategic partnerships between national governments, international organizations, development partners, security agents and regional training institutions. It is only if all these actors work jointly towards the strengthening of institutional conflict prevention capacities at different levels of society that the protection of fundamental human rights of all citizens can be attained.

With the emergence of RtoP norm and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, the region has a comprehensive framework that needs to be put in use.

Looking at the high caliber of participants, I have no doubt that this pilot workshop will offer an excellent opportunity to test and enhance the training kit that WACSI and its partners so ably designed and to further the collaboration amongst all participating institutions.

We hope that the toolkit will be of good use in future trainings on the RtoP norm, also at our regional Training Center of Excellence (TCE).

Let me end by thanking all those who have worked hard these past weeks to put together the finishing touches for this workshop – especially our dear friends from WACSI, our partners from KAIPTC and my colleagues at GIZ.

I wish all of us a very successful workshop.