

3-Days Responsibility to Pilot (RtoP) Pilot-Training for Civil Society and Multidimensional Peace Support Personnel in West Africa

Date: 5 – 7 June, 2012

Venue: WACSI Secretariat, Accra, Ghana

OPENING REMARKS BY JUSTICE EMILE SHORT, CHRAJ, and WACSI BOARD MEMBER

- The RtoP focal point for the Republic of Ghana
- The Commandant KAIPTC
- Technical Adviser GIZ
- WACSI partners and Board members
- Distinguished participants
- Men of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my greatest pleasure to welcome you today to the Opening Ceremony of the 3-day Pilot-Training on Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) for civil society actors and multidimensional Peace Support Personnel in West Africa, jointly organized by WACSI and Kofi Annan Peacekeeping International Training Centre (KAIPTC) with the support of German International Agency for Development (GIZ), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP).

It's a great honour and pleasure for me to be invited to open to open this very important training on the Responsibility to Protect. I would like to convey my most welcome and profound gratitude to the esteemed group of civil society actors and organisations who have travelled far from various countries in West Africa - Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Senegal, Guinean Bissau, Liberia, and Togo including representatives of the Economic Community of West African States, from the ECOWAS Standby-Force, the Training Centers of Excellence in Mali, Nigeria and Ghana and the various United Nations Missions herein present for your attention and taking the time out of your busy schedules to actively participate in this ceremony.

Permit me to also congratulate WACSI and its partners for conceptualizing the development of a training programme that seek to educate various groups of CSOs and partners about the controversial norm. Since its birth at the 2005 world summit the RtoP norm has consistently faced questions bothering on its goal and objective, as well as the genuineness of its intention to halt mass atrocities and mass atrocities. The lack of information and understanding of the norm among various groups had further limited the achievement of its objective to halt mass atrocities and series violations and abuses of human rights.

Despite the existence of the RtoP language in the ECOWAS conflict prevention and security architecture i.e. "*the responsibility to Prevent, React and Rebuild as central to regional peace and security*" in the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), the

controversies, misunderstanding and misinformation about the norm has not policymakers to reach concrete decision on its implementation even the few government that have signed unto it in West Africa. Implementing the norm remains difficult to establish due to many factors including the lack of political will and capacity to implement by respective governments amongst others.

In particular, the various conflicts witnessed in the sub-region in the last decade including in Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and recently in Mali and Guinea Bissau are cases avoidable by the preventive mechanisms of RtoP had it been adopted. It should be noted that the prevalent low level of understanding of the norm, the historical context, and intent are major current challenges confronting the promotion of the RtoP norm within the civil society in the sub-region, thus making capacity development and information sharing highly important.

Specifically, WACSI and partners has designed this training toolkit and training to enhance and increase the knowledge of RtoP, which is currently largely lacking among broad-based CSOs. It is hoped that the concept behind the training initiative which is to educate civil society on their roles and re-educate policy makers about their commitment at the 2005 world summit in the overall bid to increase local awareness of RtoP norm and enhance civil society capacity to engage.

You will agree with me that, civil society remain integral and a driving to establish consensus a norm as controversial as RtoP, thus, building their capacity to re-establish their role to advocate is quite significant to our overall objective of our gathering for the next 3-days. I also believe our interactions and discussions through the training will help to further identify areas of capacity, skills and information deficiencies on RtoP norm, and also help us to contextualize and incorporate the responsibility to protect as a perspective into ongoing efforts within our various contexts.

I sincerely believe your experiences, inputs, suggestions and contributions to the training toolkit in the course of this 3-days will suffice and facilitate the movement the norm from a mere concept, to a policy; and from our collective aspiration, to reality. As you may have been aware based on your various experiences, curbing mass atrocities in this part of the world (and indeed globally) will neither be easy nor quick. There is no certain blueprint for getting the job done but a major onus lies in our hands as civil society, military/peace support personnel, ECOWAS, AU, UN to collectively take the responsibility to protect ourselves from the atrocities and carnages of the past.

Wishing you a successful training and fruitful outcomes

Thank you!