

give voice to children's concerns, offer education, training and entertainment, promote tolerance, reconciliation, and raise awareness of the rights and protection of children.

I am encouraging the establishment and development of local radio programmes in conflict affected countries. Such projects, while driven by local professionals and civil society actors, will require strong support from international partners. This initiative is currently being explored in several conflict-affected countries including Sierra Leone and Liberia.

14. A Week of Truce-For the Sake of Our Children

Until now the international community has had some success, on an ad hoc basis, in negotiating temporary cease-fires with warring parties for various humanitarian purposes. UNICEF and WHO have undertaken a number of successful vaccination campaigns during such days of tranquillity, the most recent being the polio vaccination campaign conducted last year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We must build on this experience and do more. I am proposing that the international community call on all warring factions in all ongoing conflicts to stop fighting, for the sake of our children, at the same time, for a period of one calendar week. This week would be devoted to protection of children and would be more than symbolic. It would enable the international community to provide relief, registration and vaccinations to war-affected children. This should also be a period to undertake various cultural and educational activities in all countries, to promote peace, in particular activities for and by young people.

15. Imperative of Prevention

Clearly, the best way to ultimately protect children is to prevent conflicts before they occur, recur, or to resolve them before they assume destructive proportions. I urge ECOWAS states and civil society leaders to commit to taking political, economic and social measures to address certain fundamental issues within countries that tend to engender conflict. Such issues include:

- Ensuring a more equitable pattern of distribution of resources, to avoid the emergence of a centre-and-periphery relationship within countries;
- Building a fabric of national cohesion within countries, while allowing for expression of local particularities under that umbrella, i.e. building unity within diversity;
- Developing and strengthening genuine democratic practice;
- Addressing more effectively conditions of extreme poverty and despair.