

ACKNOWLEDGING that children, as nation-builders, are the guarantors of the future,

RECOGNIZING the wish of the children to establish a children-to-children network,

RECOGNIZING that education and vocational training are important means of reintegrating war-affected children and of preventing the involvement of children in future conflicts,

RECOGNIZING the need for strengthened regional initiatives for the security and well-being of children,

FURTHER TO THE Declaration of ECOWAS Foreign Ministers on Child Soldiers, signed in March 1999 in Bamako,

FURTHER ALSO to the UN Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999) and 1265 (1999) concerning war-affected children and the protection of civilian populations in situations of armed conflict,

CALL FOR the immediate release by armed groups in the sub-region of all children abducted and held against their will,

RESOLVE to ratify and fully implement the provisions of international instruments on the rights of the child,

CALL UPON ECOWAS Member States to take all necessary steps to fully implement and respect the aforementioned United Nations Security Council Resolutions, the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Labour Organization Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the draft Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Ottawa Treaty to Ban the Stockpile, Production, and Use of Anti-Personnel Mines and further calls upon all Member States to sign and ratify the protocol once it is open for signature,

COMMIT to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court and to bring to justice those who commit violations against children,

COMMIT to working closely with civil society groups to ensure the protection, disarmament, and demobilization of child combatants and reintegration and rehabilitation of war-affected children into their families and communities,