

**ACCRA DECLARATION ON WAR-AFFECTED
CHILDREN IN WEST AFRICA**

PREAMBLE

At the invitation of the Government of Ghana in collaboration with the Government of Canada, with the active participation of the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, we ECOWAS Member States, meeting in Accra from 27-28 April, 2000, adopt the following declaration:

EXPRESSING DEEP CONCERN over the exploitation, abuse, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment of all war-affected children in the region,

DEPLORING the involvement of children in armed conflicts,

PAINFULLY AWARE of the trauma suffered by war-affected children and the grave consequences for themselves, their families, and communities,

DISTURBED by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons including the indiscriminate use of landmines in the sub-region,

MINDFUL that there are many countries in the region which do not yet have comprehensive national legislation for the protection of children and children's rights,

EXPRESSING CONCERN over the lack of commitment towards the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,

RECOGNIZING the important role that training for military and other security agencies on the rights of the child can play in the protection of children, including child combatants,

MINDFUL of the important role that civil society plays in the protection, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of war-affected children,

CONVINCED of the need for governments to promote democracy and good governance to increase tolerance and understanding,

AWARE that leadership and accountability are the responsibility of governments,

RECOGNIZING and APPRECIATING the role of neighbouring states in the reception and support of refugees,