

- Agreement to have an annual “West African Week of Truce for War-Affected Children” so that humanitarian assistance can be moved in and children’s immunization programs can be conducted is vital. This week should also serve another important function: registering births. All those who have not been registered should be, for two reasons. First, this gives individual children identities and access to rights and services. Second, it serves a useful data collection function, whereby we can finally begin to know the numbers and extent of the impact of conflict on West African children.
- I also believe that we cannot talk about protecting the rights of children without including young people in the discussion. I am encouraged that you have decided to ensure that young people are included as participants and advocates, and that ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] will develop a children-to-children network within West Africa.

Here in Accra, the 21 West African youth delegates held their own conference. Yesterday, Foreign Minister Gbeho and I participated in the first-ever live Internet broadcast between Africa and Canada with them. Conducted by the Canadian non-governmental organization [NGO] “War Child,” it linked students in schools across Canada with these war-affected children.

The calibre of the dialogue among these young people was inspiring. They inherently understand the problems — they live with them daily.

I believe that if we gave them the power and resources, they could sit in this room and within hours resolve the problems. The warlords of this world would not stand a chance against the power of their energy and ideas.

To enact this agenda, however, more than declarations and speeches are needed; leadership and accountability are necessary.

Without strong leadership that is answerable to the public will, children will remain vulnerable.

Our challenge now is to ensure that what has been adopted in the Declaration and Plan of Action indeed becomes that: action.

Canada is committed to immediate and longer-term follow-up of this Plan of Action.

In the short term, Canada will commit to funding the following:

- *an ECOWAS mechanism for child protection*: Canada will help fund an assessment of existing capacity and a needs assessment for a child protection unit within ECOWAS, identifying areas for donor involvement in the region (\$300 000);