

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Guests,

Conflicts by their nature are multi-layered and as such they call for multi-layered solutions. The notion that conflicts must be solved solely through government-to-government efforts is simply false.

Solutions to our conflicts will have to come not only from our governments and international organizations, but also from the grass-roots level and/or local NGO's and Associations.

Those local priests, those cattle keepers and all those old men and women and children right in the remotest villages do also have a story, if not the best story, about conflicts which affect their daily lives.

Quite apart from the Governments and the people at the grassroots, people at the middle level of these two extreme ends: primary and secondary school teachers, shopkeepers, butchers, motor mechanics and carpenters do also matter when it comes to seeking solutions to our conflicts.

Many of these three categories of people representing the broad spectrum of the civil society may not be diplomats or high-profile personalities, but they are usually keen observers of all sort of events relating to conflict formation and conflict prevention or conflict resolution. We should always try to involve them in our efforts to resolve conflicts in Africa.

I have no doubt that many well-meaning and caring people will show their commitment to the contents of the Declaration and Plan of Action for this Conference on War-Affected Children in West Africa. The plight of war-affected children is a grim problem. We need to find a right and sustainable solution for civil society to implement.

I sincerely hope we can achieve this sooner rather than later.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that we can all appreciate the fact that no matter how well conceived our strategies and Plan of Action for dealing with these issues of conflict resolution and the plight of the war-affected children, we will not go very far with its implementation if we do not provide the necessary financial resources.

We are grateful to our external friends who have shown some commitment to help us address these issues.

But we Africans, at all levels, must be seen to raise funds to help ourselves in the first instance.