

agreed periods, be transparent and involve all actors. Sanctions and benefits must be assigned for performance. Civil society organizations, especially the mass media, child advocacy groups and women's organizations have a responsibility to insist on such accountable, transparent and participatory processes and the building of capacity both within government and civil society entities to achieve them. This is how civil society organizations can go beyond their traditional roles of educating and advocating and become effective participating partners in governance.

A careful reading of the reporting process of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will show that an accountable, transparent and participatory governance process is expected if national reports submitted in accordance with the reporting process are to be compatible with the spirit, intent and objectives of the Convention.

In summary, at the level of states parties, we should create and strengthen governance structures and processes that build and sustain partnerships in governance between government and civil society and use these institutions to formulate and implement children-centered development policies, programs and projects compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action and related agreements and conventions. Accountable, transparent and participatory governance will allow the CRC reporting process and other reporting processes to make more dynamic the governance partnership between government and civil society and provide a basis for greater support of the international community.

### **Mainstreaming Children's and Women's Issues at the Sub-Regional Level**

Mr. Chairman, it is propitious that the state of West African children should come up at this time when our leaders are making significant efforts to put our cooperation agenda on a fast track. West African leaders operating in ECOWAS must be called upon to put children's and women's issues on the fast track as follows:

- Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, CEDAW and other conventions and agreements about the protection of the rights of children and gender equality and equity; ECOWAS leaders must ensure that appropriate legislation is enacted at the state level to give force and effect to these rights. They must also adopt plans of action through governance processes of partnership with civil society and the international community.
- As an economic cooperation organization, ECOWAS must adopt children-centered and gender mainstreaming development approaches as the strategy to guide cooperation among ECOWAS states; in so doing, it must:
  - strengthen mechanisms to ensure coordination of its children-centered development strategy with the OAU, the UN system, especially UNICEF and other regional and international entities;