

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA
H.E. FLT. LT. JERRY JOHN RAWLINGS

**AT THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE ON WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN IN
WEST AFRICA, AT THE ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE**

27 April, 2000

**Hon. Chair and Co-Chairs,
Distinguished Ministers of Participating Countries,
Your Excellency, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and
Armed Conflict,
Members of the Council of State,
Honourable Ministers of State and Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Niimeɛ, Naameɛ, Nananom,
Youth Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured to welcome this distinguished gathering to Accra to deliberate with Ghanaian representatives of Government, the Armed Forces, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the media on one of the most important topics before all of our nations as we enter the 21st century—the future of our most precious resource, our children.

I wish to extend a particularly warm welcome to the Foreign Minister of Canada, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, co-chairman of this Conference, whose personal dedication and commitment have contributed in no small measure to our meeting here today. The Government of Ghana would like to express its deep appreciation for the solidarity which Canada has shown for the cause of war-affected children in our sub-region, and for the support, leadership and resources Canada has provided for the Conference.

We are aware of the extent to which Canada has made the concept of human security a cardinal principle of its foreign policy. It is a principle to which we are also deeply committed, as demonstrated by the ongoing efforts of my Government in the pursuit of peace and security in our sub-region. We therefore welcome Canada's attachment to this ideal and look forward to continuing to work with Canada in achieving our common objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sadly, we are gathered here today not to congratulate ourselves on what we have achieved thus far to bring about a more secure, healthy and educated future for our children, but rather to bring to national and international attention the plight of our children whose lives have been devastated by war—wars that have been created and perpetrated by some of us for political or material gain.