

NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE LLOYD AXWORTHY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**TO THE CONFERENCE IN WEST AFRICA ON
WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN**

**Accra, Ghana
April 27, 2000**

Human development and human security are the central global concerns of this new century.

These basic human needs start with the promotion of children's needs. Nowhere is their safety and well-being more at risk than in conflict situations.

This concern inspired our meeting here in Accra -- a demonstration of Ghanaian leadership in this area. It was just over a year ago, during my discussions with President Rawlings and Foreign Minister Gbeho, that we agreed a regional conference might make a difference in the lives of children victimized by armed conflict in West Africa.

This conference is about changing the fate of war-affected children and preventing future atrocities committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

Four years ago, Graça Machel presented the UN General Assembly with her landmark study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children.

Her report graphically conveyed the fate of millions upon millions of war-affected children. She also gave us a substantive set of recommendations—a road map of how to protect our children from this suffering.

Her message is now our motto: children have no part in war. It is the reason we are here in Ghana.

The protection of children affected by war and the promotion of their well-being is a moral, political, social and economic imperative.

Moral, because children are our creation and in their early years depend on adult members of society for their survival and development.

Political, because children who have been abused develop into adults who may be willing to turn their resentment into political violence, while their families may act out their own outrage in a destructive manner.