

strategies and approaches that should be galvanized in national plans of action formulated and implemented within an appropriate governance framework. The Convention to Eliminate All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action must also constitute companion inputs of such national plans of action.

Fifth, in view of the acknowledgment and acceptance of the principle of inseparability of the security, stability and development of all ECOWAS countries, children's issues must be addressed in a manner compatible with this principle; as such, operating within the framework of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ECOWAS must develop a coordinated approach and appropriate mechanisms to the formulation and implementation of its own plan of action for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and women.

CREATING GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS PROMOTIVE OF CHILD-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

This conference will do well to signal West Africa's "First Call" for children. West Africa needs a new beginning for children. That new beginning requires new thinking of governance and new structures and processes of governance that will respond to the needs and interests of children and ensure development. The new thinking about governance must advance governance as a new partnership between government and civil society; new structures and processes must ensure new or strengthened mechanisms for policy dialogue, new policy strategies and renewed efforts to enhance accountability, transparency and participation in governance.

Structuring A New Governance Partnership

Creating and Strengthening Mechanisms for Policy Dialogue and Consultations at Local and National Levels

As a critical problem of underdevelopment, children's issues can best be addressed when couched within an appropriate governance framework. A good governance framework is not only the best option for formulating and implementing a national plan of action in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child but also for fulfilling the reporting process required under the Convention. A framework for good governance emerges from a partnership between government and civil society operating under the leadership of government and with the support of the international community. In this respect, a framework for good governance must be characterized by an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and consultations between government and civil society organizations. Such dialogue and consultations must take place through structures and processes of governance at the local, provincial, national and sub-regional levels of governance and even at local levels must be rooted in the family and localities within communities. Such dialogues and consultations must be led by political and civic leaderships of demonstrated commitment to democratic values and the advancement of the well-being of