

## SPEECH OF ECOWAS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

MR. LANSANA KOUYATE

Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS

Accra, April, 2000

**Mr. President of the Republic,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Members of the Diplomatic corps  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish, first of all, to express my appreciation to His Excellency, Jerry John Rawlings, for having graced with his presence this opening session of the Conference on War-Affected Children.

By accepting to host this conference in this beautiful and prestigious city of Accra and providing excellent facilities to ensure its success, President Rawling's Government has reaffirmed its firm commitment to continue working tirelessly for the welfare of children and protection of those children in our sub-region who are affected by war. I wish, therefore, to express my deep gratitude to him and to thank the people of Ghana for having demonstrated their commitment to the objectives of the conference by extending their brotherly and warm hospitality to the participants. The commitment of the Government of Ghana and the personal devotion of President Rawlings are not limited to the hospitality extended to us.

In the sub-region, Ghana has always been at the forefront of efforts to resolve conflicts wherever they break out, reconcile parties wherever hatred divides them, save women and children, wherever they are in danger. Without Ghana's participation and above all, without her devotion to the cause of peace, the strength of ECOMOG, ECOWAS peacekeeping group, would have reduced drastically.

I am also, well aware that this meeting has been made possible through the resolve of His Excellency, Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the competence of his collaborators and support of his Government.

Canada spearheaded a group of countries which, through the Bergen initiative, ensured the introduction of a new concept of human security defined as a situation or state characterised by an absence of breaches of the fundamental rights of persons, their security or life. Furthermore, it was under Canada's initiative that the campaigns for total elimination of mines culminated in the conclusion of a treaty in Ottawa in 1997.