

A NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR PEACE IN GHANA

CONCEPT PAPER

Introduction

Ghana is perceived as a stable country in a very volatile region. To sustain our stability, we must demonstrate that we have learned some important lessons from the experiences of our neighbours.

While we are stable, there are myriads of conflicts, many of them violent that threaten our democracy. Our responses to these conflicts have at best been reactive. We have maintained a peacekeeping presence in the communities affected by violent conflict without being able to resolve the issues at stake. At the national level, inter and intra group conflicts have raged at different times without an acceptable mechanism for quick and timely responses to the conflicts. These approaches are not sustainable.

Current situation

The prevailing response spectrum envisages the intervention of the District Security Committee, and if need be, the Regional and finally, the National Security Committee. The focus is essentially law and order based.

National Vision

In the light of the above our national vision is to have a country characterised by a dynamic environment where people can engage in their lawful activities confident that the institutions, mechanisms and capacities for mediating differences and grievance are effective and responsive.

Broad policy objective

The broad policy objective for this Framework is to enable and facilitate the development of mechanisms for cooperation among all the relevant stakeholders in peace building in Ghana by promoting cooperative problem solving to conflicts and by institutionalising the processes of response to conflicts to produce outcomes that lead to conflict transformation, social, political and religious reconciliation and transformative dialogues.

Specific objectives

1. To harmonise peace building activities in Ghana through networking and coordination
2. To strengthen the capacity of peace building institutions and practitioners
3. To increase awareness of the use of non-violent strategies in responding to conflicts in Ghana

4. To develop a conflict prevention framework in Ghana that will monitor, report and offer indigenous perspectives, understanding and solutions to conflicts in Ghana.
5. To develop national and inter-group understanding about the values of reconciliation, tolerance, trust and confidence building, mediation and dialogue as responses to conflict.
6. To build the capacity of chiefs, women and youth groups, civil society, community organisations and other groups to participate meaningfully in promoting and maintaining peace in their communities.

The management of public order and safety is vested in the Ministry of Interior. The following framework is therefore issued by the Minister of Interior with the approval of the Cabinet, with a view to institutionalising a process of pro-active responses to conflicts and to transform them into peaceful outcomes before they become violent.

The national architecture for peace is therefore a framework for peacebuilding and for the amicable resolution of all conflicts in Ghana. The architecture for peace shall have the following components:

1. Structures for peacebuilding and the resolution of conflicts.
2. Institutionalising a culture of peace.
3. Strengthening the media as spaces for public conversations and debates on the salient issues of the day, so that all voices could be heard.
4. Prevention and control of small arms and light weapons, and promoting alternative livelihoods.
5. Building the capacity of executive institutions to manage grievance and differences.

1. Structures for peacebuilding and the resolution of conflicts

The structure for consolidating our stability and resolving conflicts shall be as follows:

- a. The District Assemblies shall establish District Peace Advisory Councils (DPACs). The DPACs shall be composed of representatives of identified groups and stakeholders including chiefs within the district giving due regard to gender and youth. The stakeholders shall nominate their own representatives to the DPAC. The DPAC members shall elect their chairperson. The principle underlying the work of DPACs is volunteerism – people coming together to protect the stability and peace in their communities. The work of DPACs shall be to promote peace within the district, create and/or facilitate spaces for dialogue between groups and communities and for the exchange of ideas on

issues that may threaten peace and stability within the community; engage in confidence and trust building activities between groups and communities in conflict within the District; promote tolerance building and to provide strategic advice and early warning on potential threats to the peace and stability of the communities. Meetings of DPAC's shall be held whenever the members consider necessary and/or on the request of DISEC.

- b. Regional Coordinating Councils shall establish Regional Peace Advisory Councils (RPACs). The composition and mandate of RPAC's shall be similar to DPAC's and shall include mediating inter-district conflicts or conflicts among groups that are across districts, conflicts among interest groups including political actors within the Region. RPAC's shall further engage in public education, sensitisation and awareness about conflict indicators within the Region and how to ameliorate them. They shall facilitate the organisation of sports and economic activities that build friendships, promote trust and goodwill between communities in conflict; organise training and other capacity building programmes for the DPACs and regular meetings with DPACs for experience sharing and knowledge management. They shall further support the Regional government and the Regional Security Council in defusing tension and facilitating the non-violent resolution of conflicts within the Region. The RPAC shall coordinate the work of all DPAC's within the Region. Volunteerism is also a core principle of the work of the RPAC's.
- c. National Peace Council. The President shall inaugurate a National Peace Council (NPC). Members of the NPC shall be nominated by a broad range of identified stakeholders and groups including political organisations within the country. The members shall elect their own chairperson. The NPC shall promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts at all levels of government, and shall work to build inter-group trust and confidence. It shall create/facilitate spaces for dialogue between national actors and interest groups, and shall engage in negotiation, mediation, reconciliation and other related processes with groups, and organisations in conflict with a view to their non-violent resolution. It shall not intervene in chieftaincy conflicts unless expressly invited to do so, either by the parties or by the respective house of chiefs. It shall make recommendations to governments and other stakeholders on actions to promote trust and confidence between groups, as well as on the implementation of agreements reached in the resolution of any conflicts. It shall also monitor the implementation of such agreements and resolutions. It shall provide strategic advice to governments and other stakeholders on consolidating our stability and preventing conflicts. The underlying principle in the work of the NPC is

volunteerism. The National Peace Council shall coordinate the work of all Regional and District Peace Advisory Councils, and organise meetings with them as often as it deems necessary. For this purpose, the members of the NPC may allocate certain regions or districts to themselves as areas of responsibility and charged with ensuring the non-violent resolution of conflicts in the specified regions and districts. The members of the NPC shall be distinguished Ghanaians, without blemish and well trained in facilitating dialogues, negotiation, mediation, conciliation and reconciliation, tolerance, trust and confidence building etc. The work of the NPC shall be guided by bi-partisanship and independence. The NPC may appoint special representatives from within or outside its members to any conflict spots in the country upon terms that will lead to a mitigation of violence in the conflict and/or its resolution. The NPC shall establish a secretariat with the appropriate number of staff to provide technical and secretarial support to the work of the Council.

- d. The government shall propose legislation to Parliament for the purpose of making the structures for peace permanent. The legislation shall spell out the duties and functions of the councils, and their relationship to other existing bodies and institutions, the functions of which institutions can complement those of the structures for peace.

Management

- e. There shall be appointed for each Region and District, Regional and District Peace Promotion Officers respectively.
- f. The peace promotion officers shall be appointed by the Ministry of Interior on the recommendation of the respective Regional Coordinating Councils and District Assemblies respectively.
- g. The PPO's shall be persons of integrity and without political bias or other affiliation.
- h. The PPOs shall work full time in the service of the Region or the District and shall serve as chief advisors on conflict prevention to the regional and district administrations.
- i. The PPO's shall be technical resources available to the Regional and District administrations and all stakeholders within the Region or District for the resolution of conflicts. They shall avail themselves to all groups within the Region/District who request their services and shall support them in resolving/transforming conflicts or mitigating violence. They shall be persons trained and well versed in conflict analysis, negotiation, conciliation, mediation and reconciliation as well in building trust and confidence among groups.
- j. The Regional and District administrations shall provide furnished office accommodation for the PPOs.

- k. The PPO's shall facilitate civil society involvement in peace building within the Region/District, as well as the collation of data on potential conflicts within the Region/District
- l. There is hereby created within the Ministry of Interior, a Peace Building Support Unit ("Department of Peace"). The Unit shall serve as the government counterpart for facilitating the work of the peace councils. The Unit shall liaise with the National, Regional and District governments, the National, Regional and District Peace Councils, and the Peace Promotion Officers in ensuring that a structured and coordinated approach to resolving conflicts within the country is adopted. In addition, the Unit shall establish an early warning and analysis section, which shall collate information from the security agencies, all district and regional administrations as well as the peace councils on potential conflict causative, triggering and perpetuating factors, and using appropriate indicators developed for the purpose, analyse the information and provide advisories to the Minister of Interior, the central, regional and district governments or to any agency or organ of government, the peace councils, or to the appropriate institution or organisation for the necessary response.
- m. The Unit shall facilitate the provision of support from the relevant national government agency or institution for the work of the peace councils and PPOs.
- n. The Unit shall serve as a think tank to the government on peacebuilding and conflict resolution issues generally, providing cutting edge perspectives and drawing attention to critical areas of need.
- o. The Unit shall liaise with the various houses of chiefs with a view to avoiding duplication and in appropriate cases providing support to the houses of chiefs to ensure that the conflicts within their jurisdictions are finally resolved.

Reporting

1. The Minister of the Interior shall ensure that every year, the Ministry publishes a report on the State of Peace in Ghana, highlighting the interventions to resolve conflicts across the country, successes, failures, challenges and lessons learned. The report shall be widely disseminated. It must be noted that success stories in resolving conflicts can act as catalysts for other groups in conflict that their own conflicts could also be resolved.
2. The PPOs shall provide regular reports as may be required by the National Peace Council.
3. The PPOs shall provide fortnightly reports to the Peace Building Support Unit. They shall also provide reports as occasion may demand to the Unit, highlighting threats, challenges, opportunities and

recommendations for action by the Ministry of Interior or the appropriate institution.

4. The regional and district peace councils are autonomous, but work under the general guidance of the National Peace Council.

Budget

1. The Ministry of Interior shall make annual budgetary provisions for the work of the National Peace Council, including sitting and other allowances for members of the council. The Ministry shall provide counterpart funding for the work of the regional peace councils. The Ministry shall also pay the salaries, emoluments and other allowances of the regional peace promotion officers.
2. The District Assembly shall pay the salaries and emoluments of the District Peace Promotion Officers.
3. The Regional and District Governments shall make annual budgetary provisions for the work of the regional and district peace councils respectively.
4. The Ministry of Interior may seek assistance from other sources to ensure that the financial requirements for supporting the structures for peace are fully realised.

2. Institutionalising a culture of peace

The Ministry shall work with all identified partners and stakeholders to institutionalise a culture of peace. The culture of peace includes the introduction of peace education subjects at all levels of education in Ghana. This will be implemented in stages. In the first stage, the Ministry shall organise consultations and support tertiary institutions to establish diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate courses and programmes in relevant areas of peace and conflict studies. With the large numbers of Ghanaians seeking tertiary education, these programmes will be self-sustaining. What is needed is initial seed support for these consultations and to design the various programmes that could be offered as well as to identify the niches of our respective institutions. Within a few years, this approach should hopefully produce substantial numbers of persons who can enter the public services, the security agencies, traditional administrations and non-governmental agencies and institutions and utilise their acquired knowledge to make a difference in how these institutions respond to problems. It is important to have quick wins to demonstrate that Ghana is moving towards non-violent means of resolving differences, and this can be achieved utilising this approach.

Related to this stage should be a programme to bring the academia and the community closer. Many NGO's and other actors have tremendous experience of community peace building. At the same time, researchers at the tertiary institutions are deepening the pedagogy of the subjects and are offering critical new insights in how to solve old and emerging problems. A process of closer interaction and exchange between "town" and "gown" should mutually benefit both and is in the larger interests of our country.

The second stage is the introduction of peace education into the curricula of teacher training and secondary schools, while the third stage will be to mainstream peace education into the curricula basic schools. Given the large number of subjects being proposed to be taught to children at the basic and secondary school levels, additional consultations are needed with the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service on the modality for introducing peace education in the schools, so that the children are not overloaded. Related to this phase should be the establishment of peace clubs at all levels of education. It is also important to organise public education programmes, quizzes and competitions among schools on peace education issues.

3. Strengthening the Media

The media is an important space for dialogue and conversation on the national development agenda. There is concern in many circles how the media is managing the freedom to own a communication medium guaranteed by our Constitution. There are no accepted standards of entry into the journalism profession and the quality of broadcasts and writings is often quite abysmal, sensationalistic and has the potential to polarise our country.

This component of the architecture for peace will promote the organisation of capacity building programmes for media practitioners. It will support increased peer regulation and self-monitoring by media practitioners. It will also support the review of the broadcast code to strengthen it as the existing code is grossly inadequate to meet the challenges of today's media. The architecture for peace will support capacity development of the National Media Commission so that it can be a more effective monitor of the work of the media. Finally, the architecture for peace will support the development of better operational relations between the National Media Commission and the National Communications Authority so that there is better synergy between them in the licensing and renewal of licenses of media institutions.

4. Prevention and control of small arms and light weapons.

A number of capacity gaps were identified in the management of small arms inventories and control in Ghana. Studies conducted in the country as showed that there is substantive local production, and poorly regulated importation of arms. While small arms and light weapons do not by themselves cause wars, their ready availability could be both triggering and perpetuating factors. Given the civil wars that have taken place within the sub region, we are convinced that there could be a huge market for arms in our region, and unless we take concerted efforts to minimise their presence in our country, we could in the future be burdened by increased acts of violence through the use of these arms. Being a signatory to the ECOOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms, our country is keen to develop more effective mechanisms for the control and management of small arms, better tracking by the security agencies, and to work towards promoting the development of alternative livelihoods for the producers of small arms. Under this component of the architecture for peace, we will establish a National Commission on Small Arms, engage in public education on the dangers of small arms and light weapons, strengthen the Firearms registry, establish a mechanism for tracking the flow of small arms, propose and facilitate the enactment of a legislation on small arms and promote schemes offering alternative livelihoods to local firearms producers.

5. Capacity building for executive institutions

Governance is conflict management. The ability of government and its institutions to effectively mediate grievance and differences is one of the main purposes of government. When people lose faith in the ability of government to be an honest broker or to effectively manage differences, they may feel compelled to resort to other loyalties and allegiances, which purpose may be contrary to national unity and stability. It is therefore important that officers of government fully appreciate how their decision making processes can contribute to peace building and conflict prevention.

Within government institutions, efforts are dissipated in building and managing factions, whose existence detract from the general purpose of government. The result is that very limited time is devoted to the challenges of governance and the needs of the people.

This component of the architecture for peace will promote the organisation of capacity building programmes for public servants and public institutions, and the establishment of service charters so that the minimum conditions for quality service exist in the respective institutions. The capacity building programmes will also enable public servants to better manage differences within their respective

institutions so that conflict becomes increasingly perceived as an opportunity for learning rather than as a destructive enterprise.

Conclusion

Our national architecture for peace is the first official national level programme for peace building in Africa. It is in consonance with the Resolution of African leaders at the First Standing Conference on Stability, Security and Development in Africa, in Durban in 2002, for each country to establish a national framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts by December 2004. The architecture for peace strengthens our role as a pacesetter in governance initiatives and follows our recent achievement of being the first country in Africa to be peer-reviewed in the context of the NEPAD Africa Peer Review Mechanism. It behoves us all therefore to support the implementation of the architecture for peace so that we can secure peace, stability and sustainable development for the next fifty years in our country.

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Minster of the Interior
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