



Remarks on the Sub-Regional Experience Sharing Workshop on 'Building and Sustaining National Dialogue and Peace Structures'

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Accra, Ghana 19 June 2019

Deputy Minister of Interior, Honourable Henry Quartey

Board member of the National Peace Council, Rev. Dr Nii Amoo Darku,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me a great pleasure to address such a distinguished gathering of eminent persons and experts from various backgrounds from across the region and the Caribbean. Your presence is a true testament of the value you place on peace in the Commonwealth.

As you take part in this important conversation which aims to strengthen political dialogue in our member countries through institutionalised dialogue mechanisms, it behoves us to reflect on how such mechanisms can enhance early warning responses as well as mitigate election-related violence and other intra-state conflicts.

As the Commonwealth family, we seek to encourage peer learning by sharing experiences and best practices. The nature of Commonwealth membership makes it an ideal platform for cross fertilisation of ideas and sharing of experiences from across the regions of the Commonwealth: in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe and the Pacific.

The conversation that we are going to have in these two days is timely. We note the surge in recent years, of intra-state tensions which range from disputed elections, constitutional crises, communal violence and other conflict situations.

You may agree with me that a dialogue process provides an opportunity to address the root causes of such forms of conflict. Most national dialogue processes are citizen-led, this ensures ownership and sustainability. The Commonwealth Secretariat supports home-grown initiatives that are inclusive and offer constructive engagement in the face of tensions.

In this regard, we enjoy a close and productive relationship with the National Peace Council of Ghana. Ahead of the 2016 elections, the Commonwealth Secretariat was invited to deliver a goodwill message at the signing ceremony of a peace pledge by the Presidential candidates. In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the National Peace Council undertook a post-election review of the “National Peace Council’s effectiveness in enhancing the capacity of Ghana’s Peace Architecture ahead of the 2016 elections.” The findings of the evaluation were intended to inform the National Peace Council’s future interventions, especially in relation to elections in Ghana.

It is through this long sustained relationship that we agreed to jointly convene this important meeting. And for that, I wish to express my utmost gratitude to the leadership of the National Peace Council.

The Commonwealth Secretariat’s sustained collaboration with the National Peace Council is in line with our integrated approach of combining elections with conflict prevention, as well as taking a more holistic and long-term view to election observation with a focus on the entire electoral cycle. We will continue to work with our member countries in their efforts to promote peace.

While the promotion of peace is a shared responsibility, your institutions are instrumental in helping to resolve tensions before they escalate to a full blown violence. I therefore look forward to the fruitful discussions on how best to build, support and sustain institutions that promote peace and engage in preventive diplomacy.

The promotion of peace is one of our core values as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter. The Charter also emphasises the need to promote tolerance, respect, understanding, moderation and religious freedom which are essential to the development of free and democratic societies.

Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2018 agreed on the importance of strengthening the Secretary-General's Good Offices and its capacity to support national requests for peace building to enable sustainable peace and security, through the establishment and strengthening of national peace and dialogue processes.

Let me conclude by expressing our commitment to support Member Countries to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, the work of the Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth is in line with the aspirations of SDG 16 which seeks to *"Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."*

I wish you successful deliberations.

I thank you!