

Opening remarks to be given at the WACSI/ICRtoP/KAIPTC/GIZ pilot toolkit training
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Good morning everyone and thank you for this opportunity to also provide opening remarks today.

I would like to first extend my appreciation to the West Africa Civil Society Institute and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, two of the ICRtoP's member organizations, and the German Agency for International Cooperation for the invitation to participate today on behalf of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP). The staff of WACSI has worked incredibly hard on this project, and the ICRtoP Secretariat is delighted to see this pilot training taking place.

It is not a surprise that such a significant initiative is occurring in West Africa. West Africa, more than any other region or sub-region, has shown its commitment to the Responsibility to Protect. ECOWAS previously created a Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to protect civilians during conflicts in Liberia in 1990, Sierra Leone in 1997, and Guinea-Bissau in 1998. In 2008, ECOWAS adopted the Conflict Prevention Framework which identifies the organization's obligations to protect human security through the prevention of, reaction to, and rebuilding after violent conflicts, humanitarian and natural disasters. I look forward to tomorrow's training in which Mrs. Florence Iheme, the RtoP focal point from ECOWAS, will lead a session looking at this regional body. Efforts to prevent mass atrocities have been taken by actors at all levels in the region, and responses have been swift by ECOWAS, individual governments, and civil society to crises such as the post-electoral crisis in Cote d'Ivoire and the present threat to populations in northern Mali. The government of Ghana in particular has been a driving force in strengthening national capacity to implement RtoP. Through its partnership with the government of Denmark and our colleagues at the Global Centre for R2P, Ghana has been crucial in the development of a national focal points initiative first launched in 2010 to increase the ability of state governments to prevent and respond to mass atrocities. I believe the Mr. Mahama Nuhu, the Deputy Director of Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation at the Ministry of Interior and the RtoP Focal Point for Ghana, is a participant in today's important pilot training, illustrating another example of the government of Ghana's commitment to RtoP.

Today's pilot training hosted here at WACSI's secretariat office and the subsequent final toolkit which it will influence are important initiatives to increase understanding of the Responsibility to Protect and enhance the capacity of civil society and multi-dimensional peace support personnel in the region to prevent and swiftly respond to these most egregious crimes. The development of this curriculum and training program can also serve as a model for similar work throughout the world.

The ICRtoP Secretariat has had the pleasure of working with WACSI for several years as the organization is a founding steering committee member of the Coalition. We have worked closely with our colleagues here to educate on RtoP and strengthen civil society support for and work on

the norm in West Africa. This partnership goes back several years when in 2008 we collaborated with WACSI and other partners, including the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Open Society Initiative of West Africa, to host a roundtable on RtoP focusing on the West African perspective. This event, which was part of a global series of roundtables on the norm, was influential in progressing civil society efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the Responsibility to Protect in West Africa as well as globally through the establishment of the ICRtoP in 2009.

I would like to now take a few moments to tell you more about the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect. The ICRtoP is a global network of over forty NGOs dedicated to advancing RtoP at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels. Formed in January 2009 by representatives of eight regional and international NGOs, including WACSI, ICRtoP members represent every region, save the Middle East, and work in a wide range of sectors including women's rights, conflict prevention, human rights, international and regional justice, and humanitarian service delivery. The ICRtoP has seven members, including WACSI and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, that are based in West Africa. In addition to WACSI and the Kofi Annan Centre I would like to welcome my colleagues from ICRtoP's member organizations that are present today, including the Centre for Media Studies and Peacebuilding, the West Africa Civil Society Forum, and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

ICRtoP members and civil society more broadly have a crucial role in the advancement of the Responsibility to Protect and the prevention of crimes under the norm's framework through programmatic initiatives focused on awareness raising, education, and capacity building. This includes examining the broad spectrum of tools available to protect populations, and reflect on best practices from past crisis situations. Civil society works to galvanize the political will to prevent and halt the commission of mass atrocity crimes, alerts actors to at-risk situations, and plays a critical role in monitoring the implementation of RtoP by actors at all levels. RtoP therefore acts as a vital new tool for civil society to hold governments and the international community accountable when they are manifestly failing to respond to grave threats against humanity.

I encourage you to visit the Coalition's website, where you can learn more about our members, the Secretariat's work, and RtoP related and country specific developments. I have brought informational brochures as well as the Coalition's most recent publication series which examines the broad spectrum of tools available under the norm's third pillar. The ICRtoP would welcome as members or supporters any of the groups here and I would love the opportunity to speak with you further on this.

Thank you.