

## 9th Meeting of the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO)

Accra, Ghana, 3 October 2007

Opening speech by Ghana's Minister of Interior Nana Obiri Boahen

Distinguished members of the Police Council,  
The Inspector-General of Police of Ghana and his colleagues,  
Distinguished delegates from the Police Gendarmerie,  
Service Commanders and Deputy Inspectors-General of Police,  
Other distinguished security officers present,  
Distinguished invited guests,  
Niimeï and Naameï,  
The media,

Since I assumed the position of the Minister of State at the Ministry of Interior, Republic of Ghana, about two months, the Minister and myself have pledged to continue with the good work done by our predecessors. We have vowed to do all that we can to facilitate effective police co-operation among the police forces of the sub-region.

Without effective police co-operation, our efforts to ensure democratic rule throughout the region may be in vain.

I am also honoured to be part of this historic occasion when the Police Gendarmerie from our sister Francophone countries are joining their counterparts to discuss issues of mutual and common interest.

I am told that the ECOWAS Commission is expanding its Political Peacekeeping and Security Department to include a police unit that will take care of police issues within the ECOWAS community.

This laudable idea has been on the commission's agenda for quite some time now and I am particularly happy that the idea is being implemented.

Distinguished delegates,

I am aware that in spite of the appreciable efforts being made by member countries to ensure that the police have the necessary resources, most of our services still lack materials, modern equipment and financial resources, and have a serious shortage of manpower to effectively combat increasingly complex organized crime.

In fact, in some states, this lack of wherewithal has sometimes made it more difficult for crime-control services to match the pace of the cancerous rise in the crime wave. In effect, even though many criminal networks have been dismantled and other members arraigned before the courts, some forms of criminal activities, including crimes of armed robbery accompanied by assassinations, human trafficking, drug trafficking, money laundering, large-scale fraud, etc., continue to disturb the peace and security of our citizens.

However, I would like to intimate that the National Patriotic Party government under the distinguished leadership of H.E. President Agyekum Kufuor has demonstrated the commitment to provide some of the essential needs of the Police Service.

Quite a number of vehicles have been provided to facilitate the easy movement of police officers and men.

More police office and residential accommodation are being put up to ease the accommodation problems facing the service and to expand the services of the police to more 'remote' areas.

More training programmes have been executed this year. Many officers have undergone training here in Ghana and abroad.

The Service is also undergoing transformation in its physical outlook as well as the orientation of the personnel. In this regard, new uniforms and other apparel have been procured to replace the old ones.

It is also the intention of the government to continue to revamp and streamline the Police Service to shed its colonial tenets and put up an armour of contemporary democratic policing. Since the governments and the good people of the West African community have embraced democracy, it is imperative that we establish and strengthen the institutions that will help enshrine democratic rule.

In view of this, the Ghana Police Service has upgraded its curricula to meet the challenges of modern policing practices all over the world. Human rights issues, police ethics, extradition and mutual legal assistance, community policing, the French language, psychology and criminal-profiling techniques have been included in the curricula. These new subjects will help enhance the performance of their duties and satisfy the expectations and challenges of the globalised community.

I have no doubt that you and your men, who are at the front lines of the battle to wipe out these crimes, can roll them back and fight the slow progress of investigations. By speeding up your investigations and making rapid arrests of criminals, you will be wiping away the frustrations of crime victims and preventing people from taking the law into their own hands.

Distinguished delegates,

The advancement in telecommunications has created the facility which assists criminals to hatch their diabolical plan in one country, execute it in another country, and run away to another country to avoid arrest and enjoy their ill-gotten worth. This brings to mind the well-known 4-1-9 operatives and drug barons. It is therefore important that we come together as one security agency and effectively share intelligence that can assist each other in the fight against transnational crime. It is only in this way that the anxiety and apprehension that grip our law-abiding citizens can be minimised.

Police forces in the sub-region should create the right atmosphere to attract reliable informants who will give reliable information on criminal activities with the knowledge that crime has become syndicated, well-organized, sophisticated and more complex.

This brings us to the importance of the kind of relationship that exists between the police and the general public. The police are sometimes criticised for being unfriendly, uncooperative, corrupt and unprofessional. Some of these criticisms may be true; some also may be false. However, I would entreat the police to have an introspection of their personnel and acquaint them with the requisite knowledge and skills of a police officer who is civil, tolerant, patient, and has a high sense of professionalism and integrity.

The expectations of the general public have been greatly aroused by the democratic tenets like freedom of speech, free press and the rule of law spreading through the sub-region.

I must, however, add that sometimes the police are unjustly criticised for alleged lapses without realising that the criminals have intriguing methods of outwitting the security agencies to avoid arrest and subsequent prosecution.

Again, the police are just one facet of the criminal justice system, but due to their ubiquitous presence even genuine delays inherent in the criminal justice system are attributed to the police.

There is no doubt, however, that the public expects the highest standards from the police and that Industry, Impartiality and Integrity must guide your work at all times.

Distinguished delegates,

I am happy to inform you that Ghana will host the African Cup of Nations – codenamed “CAN 2008” – from January to February 2008. We shall receive a lot of visitors from both far and near. Some of the visitors may pass through your countries to arrive in Ghana.

The government and the people of Ghana wish to entreat you to accord these passing visitors the necessary protocols to enable them to have a smooth journey to Ghana.

We shall also share with you through the National Central Bureau and other sources information that will assist us to identify and arrest people with intentions to mar the games. We strongly believe that you will do all you can to support us to organize a successful tournament.

My brothers and sisters,

I have noticed with satisfaction some of the topics for your two-day meeting. They all primarily concern the need for effective police co-operation and joint operations. I would therefore encourage you to remove all obstacles that hinder effective police co-operation and joint operations so that we can be proud of a unified police force that can monitor our borders effectively.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again extend a warm welcome to all of you who have found time to come. We appreciate your time and hope that you will continue to share your rich experiences with us.

I assure you, the chiefs of police, that my ministry will do all it can to support you to implement the decisions and recommendations that will come out of this meeting.

On this note I have the singular honour to declare the 9th meeting of the West African Police Chiefs Committee officially open.

Je vous souhaite la bienvenue. Merci.

Thank you.