**The National Dialogue on Sustaining Peace, Human Security and Democratic Governance**

**Peace and Security: the International Perspective**

**Her Excellency Joanna Adamson**

**Australian High Commissioner to Ghana**

Good morning. I feel privileged to share the stage this morning with Colonel Lartey and speak to you about some aspects of issues which are of fundamental importance to all of us: peace and security. Peace and security give us confidence in the future; they provide stability for governments and for business; and they enable our countries and our economies to grow and flourish.

Ghana, like Australia, is a country with international interests and aspirations, and we are both part of dynamic regions in the world. Our positions bring both risks and opportunities. Our approach to these risks and opportunities can create a better future for all of us.

This morning I want to speak about some international perspectives of peace and security: how Australia has approached some issues including as a current member of the United Nations Security Council, and mention some international dimensions of Ghana’s activities on peace and security.

**The UNSC and its role in international peace and security**

Under the United Nations Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 members. Africa has three members: presently Morocco, Rwanda and Togo. Morocco and Togo finish their two-year terms at the end of this year and are being replaced by Nigeria and Chad. Ghana has served on the Security Council three times, most recently in 2006-07.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace, or an act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means, and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. It can appoint special representatives to use their good offices to assist in resolving disputes, and it can impose sanctions or even authorise the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. In West Africa at present, there are UNSC-mandated missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire.

In October last year, Australia was elected to a 2-year term on the United Nations Security Council with Africa’s overwhelming support.

Australia has committed to being a responsive Council member on issues related to the African agenda, which represent around 70 per cent of the Council’s work.

Australia’s objectives for our term on the Security Council align closely with our key national security interests in counter-terrorism and non-proliferation, and in strengthening stability in critical regions such as Afghanistan, North Korea and the Middle East. A number of our own security interests are engaged in Africa, including counter-terrorism and transnational threats such as piracy and arms trafficking.

Our other priorities include promoting the Protection of Civilians (POC), improving women’s participation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and improving the effectiveness of the UNSC sanctions committees.

Australia is seeking to build on the important work undertaken in the Council by African Union members to encourage closer cooperation between the UN and the AU, and particularly between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. We were pleased with the success of the recent meetings between the two Councils in Addis Ababa. Australia is also making a practical contribution to the African Union’s capacity to engage the UN, by funding a Senior Adviser to the Permanent Observer Mission of the AU to the UN in New York.

Australia is also giving priority to ensuring non-Council members have access to the Council’s deliberations, including through concerted outreach in New York, Canberra and capitals.

**The Security Council and West Africa**

The Security Council has kept an active focus on West Africa since the conflicts of the mid-1990s. The Council-mandated ECOWAS force in Sierra Leone – in which Ghana played a leading role – was instrumental in ending the fighting there. The Council followed the ECOWAS force with a peacekeeping operation. The UN presence in Sierra Leone has changed over the years, and we should be seeing the departure of the current UN political mission early next year. The success of Sierra Leone proves that post-conflict stabilisation takes time and relies eventually upon local ownership of solutions, as well as the consistent work of regional and global organisations and bilateral partners.

Stabilisation in Liberia should also be considered a success. The UN mission there continues to draw down as Liberian forces take control of security. The effective inter-mission cooperation between the UN in Liberia and the UN in Côte d’Ivoire has helped monitor cross-border movements of weapons and fighters. Security in Côte d’Ivoire remains of some concern, but violence and cross-border movements of arms and fighters are nowhere near the levels of a few years ago.

The international community’s response to the events in Mali also highlights the important role of regional organisations, working closely with the UN and bilateral partners. The willingness of ECOWAS countries (including Ghana) to provide stabilisation troops - working closely with the French, and with Chad - was key to arresting the deterioration in security in Mali. The smooth handover to a UN operation in the middle of this year and successful presidential elections were key milestones.

The Security Council has always recognised the inter-related nature of the conflicts in West Africa. While there are different causes and circumstances, a security crisis in one country has so often spilled over into neighbouring countries. Likewise, the economic impacts.

The Security Council will remain vigilant to ensuring a set-back in one country does not undo the positive progress in others. We saw this recently when the Council sought briefings into the post-election issues in Guinea.

I want toacknowledgeGhana’s leadership in promoting peace, security and democracy including its role in peacekeeping. More than 80,000 Ghanaian peacekeepers have participated in 31 United Nations and subregional peacekeeping missions- from the Congo, Rwanda, Namibia, Mozambique, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to the Middle East, the Balkans, and Cambodia. More than 100 soldiers have sacrificed their lives. To victims of conflict around the globe, Ghana's peacekeepers have many faces: as military patrols, civilian police officers, electoral observers, de-miners, ceasefire monitors, humanitarian aid workers and even fighters against rebel armies. Australian and Ghanaian troops serve together in the UN Mission in South Sudan. But beyond providing men and women to assist in peacekeeping on the ground, Ghana plays an important role in training peacekeepers – military, police and civilians – at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre.

**Australia’s Presidency of the Security Council in September 2013**

One of the highlights so far of Australia’s term as Security Council member has been serving as rotating Council President in September.

The Council had a busy agenda that month: renewing the mandate of the peacekeeping mission in Liberia; and discussing a range of issues such as implementation of Libya sanctions, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the transition in Yemen, negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, and progress of the UN in Somalia.

Amidst this flurry of high-profile activity, and as a centrepiece of our presidency, Australia convened on 26 September a high-level meeting on the impact on international peace and security of the illicit trade and misuse of small arms and light weapons. This followed the adoption in April by the UN General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty, in which Australia played a strong leadership role, and the release of the UN Secretary-General’s report on small arms. The meeting in September was the first time in over five years that the Council had considered the issue of small arms in a dedicated way – the last time being a debate convened by South Africa during its Council presidency in April 2008.

Australia also managed to secure an historic Council resolution on small arms and light weaponsfrom the meeting.

This was an excellent outcome on an issue of great importance, including to Africa where small arms are a massive problem. Indeed, the illicit trade and misuse of small arms intensifies and perpetuates conflict and instability around the world. Such trade is integral to threats to international peace and security, such as terrorist acts, piracy and transnational organised crime. In many cases, it violates Council resolutions, sanctions and embargoes. The illicit trade and misuse of small arms also hinders the implementation of UN peacekeeping mandates and political missions and threatens the lives of peacekeepers. It undermines peacebuilding efforts and has devastating humanitarian consequences.

The UNSC resolution will strengthen the implementation of arms embargoes; enhance support to governments to secure and manage arms stockpiles, strengthen the role of peacekeeping missions in combating small arms threats, and improve the UN’s overall capacity to tackle these challenges.

I would like to congratulate Ghana on recently joining Australia in signing the Arms Trade Treaty. But of course Ghana has long recognised the importance of addressing the issue of small arms proliferation. The National Commission on Small Arms has been pivotal in controlling the use of small arms and light weapons in Ghana through its border control and management programme. I understand the commission has already destroyed over 5,000 illicit or illegal firearms. The Commission is working with the Attorney General’s Department to review existing policies and legislation governing small arms and light weapons in Ghana. It is also raising public awareness about the wrongful use of small arms and light weapons. And it is facilitating the marking of all state arms and all registered civilian arms: this is to promote accountability of state weapons as well as traceability and retrieval of lost or stolen arms.

Another significant initiative that Australia took during its Presidency was an event on 6 September on women’s participation in peacebuilding. A number of clear themes emerged from the event. One was the link between women’s participation in decision-making processes and lasting peace and security. It was recognised that women were drivers of change in their communities – at the fore in maintaining families and communities during conflict, and leading grassroots efforts to rebuild social and economic structures in the aftermath of conflict. Women’s participation at all levels of decision making must be encouraged, including through adequate resourcing, training, safety and security. It was agreed that national and international peacebuilding efforts should incorporate the experiences of women and civil society organisations operating on the ground.

Again, Ghana has also been active in this area. There are a few initiatives I would like to mention.

In support of the 2010 Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, Ghana developed its National Action Plan. The Plan demonstrates a commitment by the government and people of Ghana to support and promote the active participation of women in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-war reconstruction. I might add that Ghana adopted its national plan two years earlier than Australia.

In 2011, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre established a Women, Peace and Security Institute to support the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

This year one of Australia’s Youth Ambassadors in Ghana worked on gender and security issues with the Africa Security Sector Network here in Accra.

Earlier this week, Ghana hosted a three-day workshop aimed at increasing women’s involvement in peace processes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities across Africa.

Organisations like WANEP – the West African Network for Peacebuilding – are building the capacityof women to enhance their roles in peacebuilding and post conflict reconstruction as well as helping to promote the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into peacebuilding and conflict prevention frameworks at community, national and regional level.

Critically, Ghana is a leader within Africa when it comes to institutionalising its response to socio-political violence. For example, rather than leaving the issues associated with electoral disputes, chieftaincy contestations, and land disputes, to security sector institutions alone, Ghana in 2011 enacted legislation to create the National Peace Council, and the Council was formalised later that year. The Council has already contributed to the reducing of national and local tensions, particularly at election times – but also in key local conflicts, such as in Bawku and in Dagbon.

I need not remind you all of how well Ghana has done in avoiding violence that can follow disputed election results. Others in Africa have not been so fortunate. Ghanaian political leaders, in particular, deserve commendation for taking the dispute over the latest Presidential election to the courts and not to the streets, and all deserve commendation for accepting the verdict of the court. Ghana’s experience shows that strong institutions are very important foundations for security.

**Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, I mentioned that our geography brings both risks and opportunities. In West Africa there are plenty opportunities to learn lessons about peace and security. I hope I have convinced you – if you needed convincing – that the United Nations has a critical role to play in strengthening peace and security in the region and therefore in Ghana itself. I have outlined recent developments in the UN in which Australia has been involved, and I have mentioned some of Ghana’s initiatives on peace and security at both national and international level. The UN is there for all of us. Australia too is here for Ghana.