

For Immediate Press Release.

Accra, 15th March 2023

**CEASEFIRE AND SET UP AN INDEPENDENT MEDIATION COMMITTEE
TO RESOLVE THE BAWKU CONFLICT**

The Coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) concerned about the Bawku conflict is deeply troubled about the recent happenings in relation to the conflict. We are deeply concerned about the high probability of the situation degenerating into a violent situation beyond the Bawku area. We are calling on all parties, including the Mamprusi and the Kusasi, to cease fire and resort to dialogue to ensure peace. We also call on the Government of Ghana to urgently constitute an independent mediation committee to support existing processes to find a lasting resolution to the protracted conflict in Bawku in the Upper East Region.

As CSOs working in the area and on peace and security issues at various levels, we are cognizant of the protracted and complex nature of the Bawku conflict, as well as the political undertones that drive the conflict and trigger violence in the area every time.

We are aware of the various initiatives and processes, that have been put in place to resolve the conflict some of which are ongoing. However, our observation is that the recent happenings, threats of violence and the continuous agitation are indicative of the mistrust of both parties in existing or on-going processes to resolve the conflict.

We are worried that recent government approaches to maintaining peace in the area appear uncoordinated, lack intelligence, and risk engendering violence.

We are dismayed about the innocent lives and properties that have been lost to the conflict and its impact on the socio-economic livelihood of the people. The Bawku town is gradually becoming a pale shadow of itself, as trading, education, health, and social service delivery have been negatively affected by the exodus of teachers, nurses, and businesses from the town.

We are particularly concerned that recent happenings in Bawku, if not urgently addressed, will further weaken human security indicators in the area and make the area more susceptible to terrorist and extremist recruitment and attacks, thereby endangering the whole country. The conflict has a high potential to spill over to nearby communities another cosmopolitan areas across Ghana.

We are equally worried about the proliferate use of arms and ammunition by civilians and by both sides of the Bawku conflict. This makes the situation in Bawku very precarious and volatile. Frequent reports of shootings and killings in the area are a very worrying phenomenon that once again threatens not just Bawku but the whole nation.

The Coalition of CSOs concerned about the Bawku conflict unequivocally condemn all violent attacks by any party to the conflict:

1. We call on all parties to the Bawku conflict to ceasefire, lay down their arms, and resort to dialogue to resolve the conflict and any matters arising. In the interest of the people of Bawku and Ghana, we are calling on the leaders of both sides of the conflict and other stakeholders and parties not to use force and violence. This will ensure lives and properties are saved and protected. We call particularly on the youth of both sides to calm down and use dialogue rather than violence.
2. We call for the establishment of an independent mediation committee to lead and support existing efforts to bring peace to the area. We believe that such a committee will provide the national leadership needed to address this conflict. We therefore wish to call on the President of the Republic of Ghana, HE, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to establish this committee as soon as possible.
3. We urge the government, in the short term, to designate one of the ministries in charge of security to the Bawku conflict to present a more coordinated front as well as harmonise the government's efforts at addressing the issue.
4. We encourage the government to ensure a strong security presence in Bawku to ward off criminal elements that may want to take advantage of the situation to cause mayhem.
5. We also call on the government to support the work of civil society, including religious and community-based youth and women's groups, in their peace-building efforts and also in their efforts to build and re-build trust among the people of Bawku, especially in the peace-building processes.
6. We call on the government, through the Ghana police and the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons, to institute a program to rid the area of illicit weapons, which fuel the conflict.
7. We call on those who are directly or indirectly sponsoring this conflict to desist from investing in this venture that is destroying lives and communities rather than developing them.
8. We also call on the media, both new and traditional, to be circumspect in their reportage and desist from reports that rather escalate the conflict. The National Media Commission and various media houses are encouraged to training their journalists and personnel on conflict reporting.
9. We call on the government and especially state institutions mandated to deal with migrants and displaced people to step up their humanitarian response to the situation in and around Bawku to avert further suffering inflicted on the population of the area.
10. On a long term basis, we call on Government to prioritise Bawku and other conflict prone areas of Ghana in the industrialisation agenda of the country to minimise the vulnerability of those communities.

We, finally, appeal to the factions involved in the Bawku conflict to give in to peaceful mediation. We call on all other stakeholders, such as the traditional leaders, faith groups, youth groups, media natives and non-natives, political party groups, and the international community,

to support the process of peacebuilding for the sake of our collective peaceful existence in Bawku and for the peace of Ghana.

Signed By the Concerned CSOs below:

- 1. Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA)**
- 2. West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP-Ghana)**
- 3. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)**
- 4. Jaticay Centre for Human Security and Peace Building**
- 5. NORSAAC**
- 6. RISE GHANA**
- 7. Widows and Orphans Movement Ghana (WOM)**
- 8. Centre for Youth and Child Crisis Intervention (Cyccris Intervention)**
- 9. Institute of Security and Safety Policy Research - ISSAPR**
- 10. National Network of Youth Group.**
- 11. Muslim Family Counselling Services**
- 12. United Force for Development (UF4D)**

In Accra, March 15, 2023