



**WELCOME ADDRESS BY JOSEPH WHITTAL, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER,
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORKSHOP FOR SELECTED STAFF ORGANISED
BY THE NETWORK OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN WEST
AFRICA (NNHRI - WA)**

(NOVEMBER 4 – 8, 2013)

Executive Secretary of the Network of National Human Rights

Institutions in West Africa,

Representative of OSIWA,

The UN Resident Representative,

Our friends from the Media,

Participating Members of Staff of the CHRAJ.

I welcome you warmly to the 1st in the series of workshops aimed at enhancing the capacity of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in West Africa to better promote and protect human rights in our Sub – region.

I am informed that the Network of NHRIs in West Africa that was established with Assistance from the ECOWAS Commission and the West Africa Regional Office of the UN Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to foster collective action amongst NHRIs in West Africa is organising in- country trainings for NHRIs in the Sub- region.



We are delighted to play host to the Network in organising the 1st of the series of workshops planned to improve monitoring, investigation and documentation of human rights violations.

This is a timely and important initiative in view of the widespread poverty and high prevalence of outbreak of violence in the Sub-region that continues to endanger human security in our part of the world.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

We are grateful to the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), for providing funding support for such an important and timely initiative. In all, twenty participants drawn from the Head Office and other offices of the Commission in the Greater Accra Region are attending this training.

As you are well aware, the workshop focuses on Monitoring, Investigation and Documentation of Human Rights Violations, international, Regional and Sub-regional mechanisms for human rights enforcement. Such advanced training will well equip the participating human rights officers to better promote and protect human rights in the country.

I am also informed that countries participating in the programme include: Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Mali, Cape Verde and Ghana. All these countries have a long road to travel to promote dialogue on state responsibility in ensuring that human rights based approach to development; poverty eradication; economic growth and resource allocation is employed in planning and implementation of policies and programmes in order to protect vulnerable persons in their communities across West Africa.



I hope that this collaboration between CHRAJ and the Network would significantly contribute to promoting, protecting and preventing human rights violations, which include notably, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment meted out to vulnerable members of our societies especially children and women, violations of the right to life, the right to a fair trial by an impartial and independent tribunal or court, violations of the right to freedom of expression. In the sub-region we presently have serious challenges with migration due to the fact that most young persons in the sub-region seem to have lost faith in their country's democratic systems and progress. Many therefore join rickety boats across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe or undertake such perilous journeys across the Sahara desert often resulting in needless loss of lives.

We all know that the cost of human rights violations to Ghana and Africa is huge. This must be worrying to us. Thus, fighting human rights violations in Africa must occupy centre stage if we are to improve the lives of our people.

The Commission has noted that human rights situation in Ghana has improved since the inception of the 4th Republican Constitution. Nevertheless, human rights violations still persist. Among other things, allegations of witchcraft against older persons especially females and attendant banishment from their communities exist leading to the creation of the infamous "witches camps" in the north, there are persistent reports of excessive use of force by the Police and prison conditions remain harsh especially for those on remand awaiting trial. Also, Ghanaians have a penchant for mob justice despite the democratic gains to mention but a few.

In the next four days, participants here are expected to learn more about Monitoring, Investigation and Documentation of Human Rights Violations.

I have no doubt that you would take this workshop seriously and learn new ways of dealing with the numerous human rights challenges confronting us.



Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Finally, I hope that this workshop will be very successful and highly rewarding to all.

I thank you for your attention and may God bless our home land Ghana.