



**STATEMENT BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE VOLTA REGION
ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2017**

Civil Society Groups in the Volta Region of Ghana comprising the Volta Inclusion Platform, Local Governance Network, Local Accountability Network, Governance Issues Forum and WAIT-Asorgli have issued a press statement on the recent happenings in the Republic of Togo, to mark this year's International Day of Democracy.

The statement, which is jointly signed by Mr. Francis Asong, the Executive Director of VOICE GHANA and Nana Kugbeadzor-Bakateyi II, the Chief Executive Officer of Global Action for Women Empowerment (GLOWA), noted that the United Nations' International Day of Democracy is annually held on September 15, to raise public awareness about democracy globally. This year's theme of "**Democracy and Conflict Prevention**" focuses on the critical need to strengthen democratic institutions to promote peace and stability globally particularly in West Africa.

According to the Civil Society Groups, the theme could not have come any better time considering the crisis ongoing in our neighboring country, Togo. Some protesters were killed and hundreds wounded in Togo when security forces opened fire to break up sporadic protests against the ruling Gnassingbe family dynasty. President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe has been in power in the West African country since the death of his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema in 2005, who had ruled the Republic of Togo for 38 years.

The statement pointed out that the Gnassingbé family have ruled Togo since 1967 when Eyadema Gnassingbé seized power amid political conflicts between rival parties. A sergeant of the Togolese army and former soldier in the French colonial army, Eyadema's ascent to power began in 1963, when he led a military coup against the first president of the newly independent Republic of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, who was killed in the attack. A civilian government, put in place after the coup, failed to stabilise the country. This eventually led to the intervention of the army, who installed Eyadema into power. While most countries have seen some form of political change through elections, coups or even war, Togo remains an exception. Its situation is evident by the fact that every other country in the region has changed its head of state over the past decades. With the recent demise of the Yahya Jammeh regime in Gambia, Togo has truly become an outlier in political terms in the West African Sub Region.

On the occasion of this Day, Civil Society Groups in the Volta Region has condemned the counter attack by the Togolese government as this is an affront to the growing democracy in the continent. Democracy strives in an environment where the rights and responsibilities of citizens are respected and governments learn to listen to the voice of the masses. We also believe citizens have the right to protest and that right must not be infringed upon. We, the Civil Society understands Democracy to practically mean fairness, social equality, accountability and consensus building to benefit citizens at the grassroots. A government who does not listen to the voices of the masses is definitely practicing a one party state governance and citizens when suppressed, results to street demonstrations and other unrests as being experienced in our neighboring country, Togo. The recent changes made in their constitution in favour of the ruling government to continue to stay in power, is a denial of the citizens' sovereign rights to choose who should govern them within globally accepted terms/periods and, the framework of democracy and rule of law. This action is surely not a proceed of true democracy.

The statement further noted that the current happenings in Togo would not only destabilize the country but would have a rippling effect on the security of its neighboring countries particularly Ghana. Ghana and Togo share a lot in common; geographically and socioeconomically. For instance, the various ethnic groups along Ghana's Eastern frontiers have

their extensions in Togo. The Ewe tribe in Ghana has one of its ancestral homes in Togo, and it is the largest tribal group in Togo.

For instance, communities in the Volta Region of Ghana during Cultural Festivals, pay homage to their ancestral homes in Togo. Patrons of the Asogli Yam Festival; touted to be one of the biggest festivities in the region, may not be visiting Togo this year as a result of the instability in that country. The situation would also affect cross border businesses and would largely affect the two economies, since there are many citizens who depend on these businesses for their livelihood.

The statement observed that if the crisis is allowed to escalate, Ghana, especially the Volta Region is likely to be bear brunt of the spillover. It is on this backdrop that we, the Civil Society Groups in the region, on this day, call on the President, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to intervene in the situation in Togo.

We believe that, if your neighbour's house is on fire, the best thing to do is not to only put water by yours, but also join hands in dousing your neighbor's. By that, you prevent the fire from spreading to your compound, and you are also saved the troubles of having to provide refuge for the displaced neighbor.

We also wish to appeal to the leadership of ECOWAS and the African Union (AU), to take immediate steps to avert further explosion of violence in Togo.

We express our profound condolences to the bereaved families and extend our warmest compassion with all other victims of the unrest as we mark this International Democracy day.

Signed on behalf of the Civil Society Groups in Volta Region:

Francis Asong
Executive Director, VOICE GHANA, Ho
Phone: 0243913183

Nana Kugbeadzor-Bakateyi II
Chief Executive Officer
Global Action for Women Empowerment (GLOWA), Ho
Phone: 0208342152

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