

**REMARKS BY HON. DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL
INTEGRATION AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE AS
LEVERS FOR SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA, HELD IN ACCRA, GHANA 14TH
NOVEMBER, 2021**

Hon. Mark Okreku Mantey, Deputy Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture,

**Your Excellency Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for
Political Affairs Peace and Security,**

Distinguished invited Guests,

Dear Participants,

Friends of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon,

First of all, let me, on behalf of H.E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, to extend a very warm welcome to you all to Accra, Ghana. I am particularly honoured to welcome our distinguished Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Ambassador Adeoye Bankole to Ghana. Sir, we are pleased to have you in our midst today and we look forward to having more fruitful engagements with you, during your stay in Accra. To all distinguished participants, who are visiting Ghana for the first time, I entreat you to endeavour to take this opportunity to explore this dynamic and bustling city of ours.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, increasing violent conflicts across the continent continue to threaten the unity, prosperity and collective aspirations of the Africa that we genuinely desire and deserve. The implications of conflict are far reaching with diverse humanitarian, material, financial, socio-

economic and psychological costs. Our collective recognition of these dangers of violent conflicts culminated in the desire to silence the Guns in Africa by 2030.

The theme for this Seminar, 'Arts, Culture and Heritage as Levers for Silencing the Guns in Africa' is in recognition of Arts, Culture and Heritage as precious resources for peace building. It also emphasizes the crucial roles that the cultural and creative arts industries play in the socio-economic development of the continent, notably through job creation and social inclusion.

Nevertheless, today's seminar takes place against the backdrop of a worsening security situation across the continent. Nearly all sub-regions are experiencing conflicts linked to violent extremism, with devastating impacts in the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and Horn of Africa.

The youth have and continue to play various roles in the perpetration of violence. Thus, any effort at silencing the Guns will be incomplete without the active participation of the youth. I am, therefore, happy to note the presence of the youth in this Seminar, drawn from across the various sub-regions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The strength and resilience of every society lie in its culture and heritage and Africa is not an exception. Undeniably, culture and creativity have been the agent that binds our communities together. The potential of the cultural and creative industries to drive sustainable development and create inclusive

job opportunities has been recognised by UNESCO, which created guidelines on how to measure and capture data on the economic contribution of this sector.

Art can also directly nurture a peace process by providing a voice to marginalised or oppressed groups, whilst enhancing the relevance and legitimacy of the process itself. The use of art can be strategic, particularly during negotiations and mediation processes when verbal communication has been stretched to its limits, without success. Music has the power to connect people and assist them to process their griefs, losses and build bridges of reconciliation in societies divided by conflict. Thus, there is a lot we can achieve in the realm of peace and security, if we harness our Arts and cultural potentials as a continent.

As I conclude, I wish to urge all participants to use the various media outlets, in their respective countries, to promote a culture of peace. Our musicians should use their lyrics and creative outputs to promote peaceful coexistence, respect for cultural and religious pluralism and tolerance. Given the indispensable role of the youth in silencing the Guns, I urge you all to explore and come out with innovative ways on how best we can use our artistic and cultural values to deconstruct the minds of the youth, towards eschewing violence and embracing peace.

Thank you for your kind attention.