

COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

ECOWAS COMMISSION

COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO



Rev.2

**THIRTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE AUTHORITY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Ouagadougou, 19 January 2007

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

ECOWAS Commission,
Ouagadougou, January 2007

INTRODUCTION

The thirty-first ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 19 January 2007 under the chairmanship of His Excellency, Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger and current Chairman of ECOWAS.

The following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives attended the meeting:

- His Excellency Thomas Boni Yayi
President of the Republic of Benin
- His Excellency Blaise Compaoré
President of Burkina Faso
- His Excellency Laurent Gbagbo
President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor
President of the Republic of Ghana
- His Excellency Jao Bernado Viera
President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau
- Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia
- His Excellency Amadou Toumani Touré
President of the Republic of Mali
- His Excellency Mamadou Tandja
President of the Republic of Niger
- His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo
President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria

- His Excellency Maître Abdoulaye Wade
President of the Republic of Senegal
- His Excellency, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe
President of the Togolese Republic
- Honourable Mrs Fatoumata Sidibé Kaba
Minister of International Cooperation
Representing the President of the Republic of Guinea
- Honourable Alhaji Mohammed Daramy
Minister of Development and Economic Planning
Representing the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Charles Konan Banny participated in this session.

The following personalities also attended the thirty-first session as observers:

- Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation
- His Excellency Rodolphe Adadah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Republic of Congo, representing the President of the African Union
- Mr Soumaïla Cissé, President of the UEMOA Commission
- Mr. Justin Baro, Acting Governor of the BCEAO
- Mr Ablassé Ouédraogo
Representing the ADB President
- And several members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of regional and international institutions.

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was marked by the welcome statement of H.E. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, the opening address of His Excellency, Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger, and current Chairman of ECOWAS and the UEMOA, the congratulatory speech of the Heads of State and Government, delivered by His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Her Excellency Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the address of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, as well as the messages of the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the African Union and the United Nations Secretary-General.

The Authority adopted these addresses as working documents of the summit. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to the development of the national economies of West Africa through the regional approach by making ECOWAS an effective instrument for promoting the integration process.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECOWAS COMMISSION INTO A COMMISSION AND RESTRUCTURING OF ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS

The Authority commended the transformation of the ECOWAS Commission into a Commission as well as the restructuring of the ECOWAS Institutions aimed at making the Institutions more efficient, with a view to enabling them fully play their role in the integration and development process of the region and to better adapt to the international environment.

They urged the in-coming Chairman of ECOWAS to convene a meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Finance and of the new Commissioners to set clear priority areas for the Commission that will give impetus to an action-oriented focus on a few sectors such as energy, transport, information and communication technology as well as trade facilitation.

THE ECOWAS COMMISSION

The Authority took note of the nomination of the following Commissioners by the Council of Ministers:

Vice Président	Jean de Dieu SOMDA	(Burkina Faso)
Commissioner for Administration and Finance	Dr. (Mrs.) Adaoha C. OKWUOSA	(Nigeria)
Commissioner for Trade, Customs, Industry and Free Movement of Persons	Mr. Mohamed Daramy	(Sierra Leone)
Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources	Ouseini Salifou	(Niger)
Commissioner for Infrastructure	Comla Kadje	(Togo)
Commissioner for Macro-economic Policy	Lambert N'galadjo Bamba	(Côte d'Ivoire)
Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security	Col. Mahamane Toure	(Mali)

The Authority took note of the acceptance of the Republic of Senegal to present three candidates for selection to the post of Commissioner for Human Development and Gender.

ECOWAS BANK FOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (EBID)

Following the restructuring of EBID, the Authority adopted a Supplementary Protocol relating to the amendment of Articles 1, 3, 6 and 21 of the revised Treaty as recommended by the Council of Ministers, to turn EBID into a single management structure with two windows (for concessional and private sector operations).

ECOWAS PROGRAMMES

The Authority adopted the 2006 ECOWAS Annual Report presented by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the reports of the two sessions of the Council of Ministers and of the meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council (at ministerial level). The reports focused on the ECOWAS regional integration and cooperation programmes, institutional issues as well as regional peace and security.

REGIONAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

The Authority expressed serious concern over the slow progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The Heads of State and Government urged all Member States to improve upon economic governance through the adoption of appropriate macro-economic policies and enhanced structural reforms that will generate the level of economic growth required for attaining the MDGs, especially the halving of the incidence of poverty in the region by 2015.

The Authority welcomed the collaboration the ECOWAS Commission has established with the UEMOA Commission and the World Bank for the formulation of a regional approach to complement national poverty reduction programmes. All Member States were invited to take the regional dimension of poverty into account in their national PRSPs.

EXTERNAL INDEBTEDNESS AND WEST AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

The Authority stressed that the high external indebtedness of ECOWAS countries hinders development efforts and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Authority however expressed satisfaction at the commitments made by the development partners to cancel the external debts of many developing countries including some ECOWAS countries. It invited the West African development partners to extend these measures taken under the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) and the multilateral debt relief initiatives (MDRI), to all ECOWAS countries, while making eligibility conditions less stringent.

MONETARY COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The Authority stressed the need to deepen macro-economic convergence and to enhance the performance of Member States to give greater credibility to the second monetary zone and the ECOWAS single currency. In this regard, it urged all the Member States to redouble efforts to comply with the macro-economic convergence criteria through strict budgetary discipline and structural reforms aimed at expanding the production base.

FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS

The Authority expressed concern over the numerous obstacles still existing along West African highways and at the borders of ECOWAS Member States, which lead to undue delays in administrative formalities and extortion of travellers. The Authority congratulated Burkina Faso on the removal of all unofficial check points along its international highways. It urged all the other Member States to emulate this measure in order to eliminate obstacles to the free movement of travellers.

Desiring to enable ordinary citizens of ECOWAS take full advantage of their membership of the Community, the Authority urged Member States to take all necessary measures to implement the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment.

The Authority expressed satisfaction at the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish pilot units for the free movement of persons along the Lagos-Cotonou, Lomé-Accra, Abidjan-Ouagadougou and Bamako-Conakry axes, create a central coordination and monitoring bureau, grant an incentive allowance to the best security officers at border posts and apply severe sanctions on erring officers.

ECOWAS PASSPORT

The Heads of State and Government praised the Republics of Benin, Guinea and Senegal for effectively putting into circulation the ECOWAS Passport which confers Community citizenship on the peoples of the region. They urged the other Member States to take the necessary measures to print and put into circulation, this important travel document, without further delay.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The Authority recognised that the issue of migration had become a major pre-occupation for the West Africa region, particularly since it involves youths, the most active members of a country, and also because ECOWAS countries are the main source of transit for migration from Africa to Europe.

The Authority further agreed that while the security dimensions of the migration phenomenon do not have easy solutions, urgent attention must be given to the development dimension in order to resolve the problem of poverty which encourages emigration. It was decided that one of the regional strategies would be the

establishment of an adequate fund to meet the development needs of Member States, and a better facilitation of the transfer of the savings of migrants.

WEST AFRICA – E. U. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)

The Authority stressed that the EPA currently being negotiated between West Africa and the European Commission should help to achieve the objective of reducing poverty. In this regard, the agreement must take into account the development dimension, notably in building supply capacities, improving the competitiveness and up-grading of West African economies.

Concerning the end of the 2007 deadline for the signing of the agreement, the Heads of State and Government urged the negotiators to be flexible in their approach, with a view to concluding an EPA that serves the interests of the peoples of West Africa.

MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

The Authority deplored the fact that the suspension of the Doha round led to the reluctance of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to take into account some of the concerns of the West Africa region, notably the cotton issue.

The Authority underscored the importance of an efficient multilateral trade regime founded on fair, equitable and transparent rules. It therefore urged all the members of the WTO to translate into action their declared commitment towards the successful completion of the on-going negotiations, in line with the mandate of the Doha development round.

The Authority also invited the development partners to go beyond the commitments made in Hong Kong in order to eliminate all domestic subsidies on agriculture, notably cotton.

The Heads of State and Government particularly insisted on the need to make the different promised support measures available and to find a lasting solution to the cotton issue.

BIRD FLU

In order to prevent an avian influenza epidemic, the Authority expressed satisfaction at the establishment of a regional structure for the prevention and control of bird flu in West Africa. The Authority invited development partners to support the implementation of the regional strategic plan for the prevention and control of avian influenza. It thanks the ADB for the measures taken in respect of the domiciliation of the emergency fund established for that purpose.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Taking into consideration the importance of infrastructure in the integration and development of West African economies, the Authority directed the ECOWAS Commission to accord priority to the development of this sector, especially the completion of the remaining portions of the international highways, the interconnection of rail networks with a standard gauge, as well as the development of the telecommunications and energy sectors. The Authority urged all Member States to create an enabling environment for infrastructural development and policy harmonisation in these sectors.

Telecommunication

The Authority adopted a regional telecommunications policy and a regulatory framework covering specific aspects of the sector such as interconnection to ICT and services networks, licensing regimes and management of the radio frequency spectrum.

ECOWAS Energy Programme

The Authority expressed its concern over the impact of the increase in the price of petroleum products on non oil-producing Member States. It invited the ECOWAS Commission to make proposals to assist the Member States involved to reduce the cost of petroleum products.

The Authority took note and expressed satisfaction at the remarkable progress made in the construction of the West African gas pipeline, the first phase of which extends from Lagos to Accra, passing through Benin and Togo. It further requested the ECOWAS Commission and Member States to explore the possibility of extending the West African Gas Pipeline to all ECOWAS Member States.

The Authority further noted with satisfaction the breakthroughs recorded in the establishment of the ECOWAS Power Pool system, which is charged with linking the electricity grids of the member countries with a view to eliminating the energy deficits within the region.

The Authority directed the ECOWAS Commission to harmonise national policies and to establish a regional regulatory body.

The Authority also invited the Member States that had not ratified the ECOWAS protocol on energy to do so as soon as possible.

INFORMATION SOCIETY

Desiring to reduce the digital divide between developed countries and ECOWAS countries in the field of ICT, the Authority adopted a declaration on the Information Society. In that regard, it stressed that access to information, information sharing, and the creation of knowledge contribute significantly to enhancing economic, social and cultural development thereby enabling ECOWAS Member States to meet their development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

A. Countries in conflict

Cote d'Ivoire

The Authority expressed deep concern over the persistent crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. The Heads of State and Government stressed the need to find a lasting solution to the crisis, based on the immediate concomitant launching of a programme of citizen identification and disarming armed groups in order to create the necessary conditions for the organisation of credible elections by October 2007. They called upon all Ivorian Political forces to cooperate in the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1721 (2006).

They welcomed the initiative of President Gbagbo for dialogue with Ministre d'Etat Guillaume Soro and called upon the Chairman of ECOWAS to facilitate the dialogue to give momentum to the peace process.

In addition, it decided in consultation with the African Union, to send a high-level delegation to permanent members of the UN Security Council with a view to exploring the ways and means of ensuring diligent application of Resolution 1721, depending on the outcome of the dialogue.

The Authority called upon the UNSC to visit Côte d'Ivoire to add impetus to the peace process.

B. POST CONFLICT COUNTRIES

Liberia

The Authority expressed delight with the extension of the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) up to the end of March 2007, and hoped that the gradual withdrawal of UN troops would be possible in the near future with the improved security situation and considerable progress in security sector reforms.

The Authority further lauded the lifting of UN sanctions on logging in Liberia and encouraged the government of that country to press on with the improvement of the monitoring system for diamond exploitation in order to facilitate the lifting of sanctions on this strategic resource.

The Authority expressed satisfaction with the interest shown by the European Union, following the request made by ECOWAS for a selective lifting of the UN travel embargo imposed on certain personalities, aimed at revitalizing the national reconciliation process in Liberia.

Guinea Bissau

The Authority took note of the establishment in New York on 21 September 2006, of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau as well as the round table held on 7 and 8 November 2006, which served as a forum for discussing medium and long-term prospects and mobilizing resources needed to achieve the objectives of reconstruction and development.

The Authority also invited development partners to support Guinea Bissau in its economic recovery efforts, while encouraging the government of Guinea Bissau to be steadfast in the pursuit of its economic and security sector reforms.

Sierra Leone

The Authority welcomed the role the integrated UN Office (UNIOSIL) is playing for the stability of the country, particularly as regards the democratization process. The Authority also underscored the importance of presidential and legislative elections scheduled to be held in Sierra Leone in July 2007, the first to be held without the presence of a UN military contingent. The Heads of State and Government underlined the importance of all parties respecting democratic rules and freedom of movement and expression during the election campaign.

The Authority further expressed satisfaction that Sierra Leone had been accepted as one of the countries to benefit from the UN Peace Building Commissions Programmes.

Guinea

The Heads of State and Government expressed concern about the deepening crisis in Guinea. They called on the in-coming Chairman to dispatch a delegation to Guinea for consultation with all political stakeholders with a view to encouraging the use of dialogue and non-violent means to resolve their differences.

Togo

The Heads of State and Government expressed satisfaction at the success of the inter-Togolese dialogue and called upon the international community to support the effort of Togo to hold legislative elections in 2007 and the economic programme of the Government.

C. CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

The Heads of State and Government noted that several presidential and legislative elections would be held in some Member States in 2007, and called for the respect of the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance in ensuring the holding of credible and transparent elections.

D. MECHANISM FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESOLUTION, PEACEKEEPING AND SECURITY

Aware of the fact that effective implementation of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism can advance the cause of peace in the sub-region, the Authority urged the countries that have not yet done so, to ratify the protocol.

E. COUNCIL OF ELDERS

The Authority took decisions on the duration of the tenure, the tasks assigned to and the appointment of members of the Council of Elders, in order to make this structure operational.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING ECOWAS MEMBER STATES TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION

The Authority set criteria for the selection of ECOWAS Member States as members of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

The Authority requested Member States to provide active support to the candidature of Burkina Faso as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2008-2009.

The Authority expressed appreciation to the Republic of Ghana for the manner in which it had carried out its mandate as a member of the United Nations Security Council, to the satisfaction of all the members of the Community.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Authority expressed its gratitude to all the ECOWAS development partners for their support to the consolidation of peace, security and regional integration in West Africa.

ELECTION OF THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF AUTHORITY

The Heads of State and Government elected His Excellency Blaise Compaore, President of Faso, as Chairman of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government for a term of one year.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SUMMIT

The next ordinary session of the Authority will be held on the second Friday of June 2007 in Abuja, Nigeria.

TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT TANDJA

The Heads of State and Government expressed their sincere thanks to His Excellency President Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger, for his leadership role in the promotion of regional peace and security and in the deepening of the ECOWAS integration and development process. They lauded the contribution of President Tandja to regional integration and the furtherance of the ideals of democracy.

TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO

The Authority expressed its deep gratitude and paid glowing tribute to His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on the eve of his exit as Head of State of Nigeria. The Heads of State and Government commended the invaluable role played by President Obasanjo in the strengthening of the integration process, peace and security in West Africa. President Obasanjo is personally and unreservedly committed to the building of stability and prosperity in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular.

TRIBUTE TO MR KOFI ANNAN

The Authority also paid special tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, out-going United Nations Secretary-General, for his achievements at the helm of the international organization and for his positive contribution to the consolidation of peace and security in the world and in our sub-region in particular.

VOTE OF THANKS

The Heads of State and Government expressed their gratitude to His Excellency Blaise Compaore, President of Faso and Chairman-elect of ECOWAS, for the generous hospitality extended to them during their stay in Ouagadougou. They specially thanked him for the vision outlined in his acceptance speech, for moving the integration of West Africa forward. The Authority wished the Burkinabe people happiness and prosperity.

The Authority expressed its gratitude to all the Heads of State and Government who are taking part in the ECOWAS peace initiatives aimed at finding an acceptable and lasting solution to the conflicts in the region.

THE AUTHORITY