




Statement of the ECOWAS Commission

ECOWAS Calls for Urgent Action to Address Sexual Gender Based Violence and Protect the Rights of Women and Girls.

1. The Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) condemns unequivocally the rise in cases of Sexual Gender-Based Violence especially against Children. The almost daily news reports of rape of children including toddlers who are violated and, in many cases raped to death are very disturbing and utterly unacceptable. This growing trend goes against international and regional legal texts including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the ECOWAS Child Policy (2019-2030). It also goes against fundamental African norms and value system that places the accountability for the development and well-being of every Child as the primary responsibility of every family and community.
2. On its part, the ECOWAS Commission and the Regional Child Protection Working Group (RCPWG) on the 20th April, 2020 issued a Joint Advisory to all ECOWAS Member States as a Call for Action and guidance to mainstream Child Protection in Government Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic and Recovery Plans. The Joint Advisory is attached to this statement.
3. The ECOWAS Commission in line with the Joint Advisory recommends that the Member States take immediate action to ensure the continued functioning of the Child-Friendly Reporting mechanisms such as Child Helpline and Hotlines to enable child friendly reporting, counselling, and response. ECOWAS also urges traditional, religious and opinion leaders at the national and community levels to mobilize the people against all forms of Sexual Gender-Based Violence. 

4. As an immediate step, the Commission will convene a Virtual meeting of the relevant National Institutions in the Member States, International Partners, and Non State Actors to agree on a Joint Regional Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence with a special focus on Child Sexual Abuse. This is to galvanize immediate action across the ECOWAS region towards stamping out this dangerous trend and ensuring that every child is protected now and beyond the COVID -19 Pandemic.

5. The Commission of the Economic Community of West African States reiterates its commitment to continue to secure the rights and the well-being of all ECOWAS citizens, with particular attention to the rights of Children. In this respect, all local, national and international actors including, Civil Society, the Private Sector support Member States with the technical and financial resources to stem the tide of increased violations of the rights of Women and Children in the West Africa region.

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ECOWAS Commission

