



**FIFTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION  
OF THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

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**FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

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1. The Fifty-eighth Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held on 23 January 2021 via videoconference, under the chairmanship of **H. E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana**, and Chair of the Authority.

2. Present at the Summit were the under-listed ECOWAS Heads of State or their duly mandated representatives:

H.E. **Patrice Talon**, President of the Republic of Benin;

H.E. **Roch Marc Christian Kaboré**, President of Burkina Faso;

H.E. **Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca**, President of the Republic of Cabo Verde;

H.E. **Alassane Ouattara**, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire;

H.E. **Adama Barrow**, President of the Republic of The Gambia;

H.E. **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo**, President of the Republic of Ghana;

H.E. **Prof. Alpha Conde**, President of the Republic of Guinea;

H.E. **Umaro Sissoco Embalo**, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau;

H.E. **George Manneh Weah**, President of the Republic of Liberia;

H.E. **Bah N'daw**, President of the Transition, Head of State, Republic of Mali;

H.E. **Mahamadou Issoufou**, President of the Republic of Niger;

H.E. **Muhammadu Buhari**, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;

H.E. **Macky Sall**, President of the Republic of Senegal;

H.E. **Julius Maada Bio**, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone;

H.E. **Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe**, President of the Togolese Republic.

3. The session was also attended by:

- H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of ECOWAS Commission;
- H.E. Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS);
- H.E. Abdallah Boureima, President of the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA);
- H.E. Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner Peace and Security - AUC, representing H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

4. The Heads of State and Government took note of the 2020 Annual Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, as well as the reports of the 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Meeting of ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council and the 85<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

5. They commended the quality of the reports and the relevant recommendations contained therein, which are aimed at contributing to the attainment of ECOWAS' objectives regarding growth and stability within the region.

6. The Authority, after deliberations, endorsed the main recommendations contained in the different reports, and then considered the following specific issues:

## **ON ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES**

7. The Authority takes note of the unfavourable development of economic activities in ECOWAS in 2020, which would be characterised by a 1.7% decline in real GDP, following a 3.9% real growth in 2019, as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, it urges Member States to accelerate and step up the implementation of measures to combat COVID-19 and revive economies.

### **I. CREATION OF A MONETARY UNION**

8. The Authority takes note of the deterioration in ECOWAS macroeconomic convergence situation in 2020, as a result of measures taken by Member States to combat COVID-19 and revive their economies. In view of the expected impact of the second wave of the pandemic on the macroeconomic convergence situation in 2021, the Summit decides to grant Member States a waiver with regard to meeting the macroeconomic convergence criteria in 2021.

9. The Authority commends the Ministerial Committee on the Single Currency Programme for the steps taken to implement the decisions of its 57th Ordinary Session held on 7 September 2020, in Niamey, Niger. It instructs the Commission, in conjunction with the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA), West African Monetary Institute (WAMI), UEMOA Commission and Community Central Banks, to submit to its next Ordinary Session:

- i. the draft of the new Convergence and Macroeconomic Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States, with 1st January 2022 as the start date of the convergence phase; and
- ii. the new roadmap for the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.

10. The Heads of State and Government also take note of the status of implementation of the ECOWAS payment and settlements system. The aim is to establish a multilateral mechanism whereby national currencies will be used for the payment and settlement of intra-Community transactions. They instruct the Commission, in conjunction with Community Central Banks and the West African Monetary Agency, to expedite work for the rapid interconnection of ECOWAS payments systems and submit a report at the next Ordinary Session in June, 2021.

## **II. AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA**

11. The Authority welcomes the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 1st January 2021 and ratification of the agreement by twelve (12) out of the fifteen (15) ECOWAS Member States. It also takes note of the submission to the African Union of common schedules of tariff concessions for trade in goods and specific commitments on trade in services in five (5) priority sectors.

12. With a view to maximising the benefits of the region's membership of the AfCFTA, the Authority:

- i. Calls on Member States that are yet to ratify the Agreement to accelerate the process of ratification in order to promote harmonious trade liberalisation in the region and maintain the integrity of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff;
- ii. Instructs the Commission to continue to support Member States in the development and implementation of national strategies for adaptation to the rules of the AfCFTA, while ensuring their consistency with the regional strategy developed to that effect;

- iii. Urges the Commission to continue advocacy campaigns in Member States to ensure greater involvement of all stakeholders (governments, private sector and civil society); and
- iv. Instructs the Commission to continue coordinate the positions and approaches of Member States in negotiations under the AfCFTA.

### **III. COVID-19 SITUATION**

13. The Authority welcomes the successful handling of COVID-19 by Member States, through the bold measures and robust initiatives taken in the different countries to contain the pandemic.

14. It also commends the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, Champion of the Fight against COVID-19, who spared no effort to mobilise the required logistics and resources to support the regional dimension of the response to the pandemic.

15. The Authority applauds the three Ministerial Coordinating Committees on Health, Finance, Transport and Trade, as well as the ECOWAS Commission and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), for the ongoing efforts to implement the decisions of the Niamey Summit, particularly regarding the availability of COVID-19 vaccines for the region, against the background of the outbreak of a new COVID-19 wave in the ECOWAS region.

16. The Authority approves the harmonised ECOWAS Protocol for cross-border movement of persons and goods during the pandemic and caps the cost of COVID-19 PCR test for travel within the region by ECOWAS nationals at a maximum of US\$50.

17. The Authority also approves a pooled procurement approach for anti-COVID vaccines. It instructs the ECOWAS Commission to set up a Vaccine Revolving Fund and calls on national governments, development banks, the private sector and partners to contribute to the Fund. The Fund will be used

to secure anti-COVID vaccines in the region through short-term pooled procurement and medium-to long-term regional manufacture.

18. The Authority also instructs the ECOWAS Commission and WAHO, in conjunction with Member States, to lead the process of sourcing 240 million doses of preferably WHO-approved vaccines through direct and collaborative approaches to manufacturers, partners and friendly foreign governments that may be willing to sell extra doses that they may have pre-purchased. The Authority requests the ECOWAS Commission and WAHO to drive the process of supply of vaccines, in line with the COVAX Initiative and taking into account the initiatives of Member States at the continental and international level, to ensure the availability of as many vaccines as possible. Authority also directs that the vaccination campaign should start latest by the end June, 2021.

19. The Authority decides to immediately establish a COVID-19 Donor Working Group to undertake the fundraising campaign and appoint eminent citizens as investment champions to support the campaign.

#### **IV. FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS AND GOODS**

20. The Authority congratulates the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the reopening of its land borders with its neighbours and also calls on Member States to continue their efforts in the effective implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment.

#### **V. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

21. The Authority endorses the Declaration on Zero Tolerance for Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls in the ECOWAS region, and to promote cooperation and collaboration across national borders between ECOWAS Member States and third countries, with a view to preventing and combating this scourge.

## INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

22. The Authority takes note of the ongoing institutional reforms in Community institutions, in particular the development of Vision 2050, formulation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, and the Human Capital Development Programme, as well as the staff skills audit and the revision of the Staff Regulations, which are currently being finalised. The Authority directs the President of the Commission to continue the efforts of reduction of the operating costs of ECOWAS Institutions.

## ON PEACE, SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY

23. The Authority reaffirms its commitment to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the region as prerequisites for the economic integration and development of the region.

24. The Authority welcomes the successful conduct of presidential elections in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Niger. It commends the Governments and people of these countries for the successful conduct and organisation of the electoral processes and deplors the rare incidents of violence that marred elections in some countries.

25. The Authority extends its warmest congratulations to Their Excellencies **Roch Marc Christian Kabore, Alassane Ouattara, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and Alpha Conde** for their re-election to the highest public office of their respective countries, and wishes them every success.

26. The Authority also welcomes the successful conduct of the first round of the presidential and legislative elections in Niger on 27 December 2020 and calls on the political stakeholders in Niger to maintain the momentum for smooth conduct of the runoff election on 21 February 2021.

27. The Authority encourages Member States to further engage in political dialogue before elections to create a conducive environment for a peaceful and consensual outcome of electoral processes. Furthermore, it instructs the

President of the Commission to maintain ECOWAS support to Member States conducting elections.

28. On **The Gambia**, the Authority takes note of the political divergencies in the country regarding the revision of the Constitution as the country prepares for presidential and legislative elections at the end of 2021. It commends H.E. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for agreeing to facilitate dialogue among national political stakeholders on the contentious issues surrounding the draft Constitution, which is due to be put to a referendum in June 2021 before the presidential elections in December 2021.

29. The Authority welcomes the progress made and calls on all political stakeholders in The Gambia to build consensus on the draft Constitution. It calls on the relevant authorities to maintain dialogue for the adoption of the Constitution and the compliance with the electoral calendar.

30. The Authority congratulates the President of the Commission for the implementation of the Decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, taken at its 57<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session held on 7 September 2020 in Niamey, Republic of Niger, to transform ECOMIG into a Police Mission.

31. The Authority decides to extend the mandate of ECOMIG for a period of twelve (12) months from 1 January 2021 and transform it into a Police Mission after December 2021 elections. It expresses its gratitude to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo for agreeing to contribute Constituted Police Units to ECOMIG, and the European Union for its financial and technical support.

32. On **Mali**, the Authority takes note of the Report of the Mediator, H.E. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on the monitoring of the transition in the country. It commends the Mediator for his continued efforts to maintain dialogue among the Malian stakeholders in order to ensure a successful transition within the timeframe decided upon by the Authority.



33. The Authority takes note of the establishment of the transition bodies and appointment of the heads of the different transition bodies, including the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the Chair of the National Transition Council, as well as members of the interim government and the National Transition Council.

34. The Authority underlines the need for the timely implementation of the various decisions relating to the Transition, in a more consultative and inclusive approach with all stakeholders. It expresses concern over the recent arrests linked to an alleged attempt to destabilise and undermine State security and calls for transparency and compliance with the legal procedures in force.

35. The Authority urges the Malian authorities to conduct a peaceful transition and Transitional Government to prepare and disseminate a roadmap with a timetable in order to respect the transition calendar as set by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. It is concerned about the failure to dissolve the NCSP, despite the fact that the Transitional Government has since been formed. The Authority was informed by H.E. Mr. Bah N'DAW, President of the Transition, Head of State, of the adoption of the decree dissolving the NCSP which will be made public shortly, as well as the submission of the Transition Roadmap to the National Transition Council for adoption.

36. The Authority remains seized with the situation in Mali and encourages the Mediator to continue his efforts to monitor the Transition.

37. On **Guinea-Bissau**, the Authority welcomes the smooth functioning of the institutions since the formation of the national unity government, and the adoption of its budget and programme by the National People's Assembly (ANP), and the ruling handed down by the Supreme Court on 4 October 2020 on the electoral dispute arising from the presidential elections of December 2019.

38. The Authority expresses concern over the emerging tensions among political stakeholders surrounding the planned amendment of the Constitution and urges them to build consensus on the proposed amendment in order to avoid a fresh political-institutional crisis. To this end, the Authority recalls the long political-institutional crisis and invites all actors to work for the stability of the country.

39. The Authority welcomes the withdrawal of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB) following the successful completion of its mandate to ensure stability in Guinea Bissau. It expresses its gratitude to the Troop and Police Contributing Countries to ECOMIB, particularly Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo for the great solidarity shown in the achievement of the regional peace and security agenda. The Authority reiterates its gratitude to the European Union for its continued financial and technical support throughout the deployment of ECOMIB, thus contributing substantially to the stability in Guinea Bissau.

40. The Authority instructs the President of the Commission to maintain ECOWAS support to the Government of Bissau-Guinea in its efforts to consolidate democracy and institutional reforms, including the adoption of a new Constitution to ensure the stability of the country.

41. On **terrorism**, the Authority is concerned about the continued terrorist attacks in frontline countries, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, despite the intense efforts deployed by these countries. It further notes, with concern, the increased spate of attacks, in the form of reprisals, against the civilian population. This is the case of the attack perpetrated in Nigeria by Boko Haram on 29 November 2020, in the vicinity of Maiduguri, in Borno State, during which dozens of farmers and fishermen were killed. In Niger, on 2 January 2021, armed individuals killed around 100 people in attacks on two villages in the Tillabéri region along the border with Mali.

42. The Authority reaffirms its determination to relentlessly combat this scourge, and strongly condemns the terrorist attacks in the region. It expresses solidarity with the affected Member States and populations.

43. In this regard, the Authority deems imperative the diligent and effective implementation of the 2020 - 2024 Action Plan to eradicate terrorism in the region, adopted on December 21, 2019 by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. To this end, the Authority congratulates the Republic of Ghana for the announcement of its contribution of fifty (50) million dollars for the implementation of the Action Plan and the payment of five (5) million already made to the Fund dedicated for this Plan. It also congratulates the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the confirmation of its contribution of three hundred and fifty (350) million dollars for the implementation of the Action Plan.

44. The Authority urgently appeals to Member States to expedite payment of their voluntary contributions to the Fund dedicated for the implementation of the Plan of Action for the eradication of terrorism in the Region. In order to boost the implementation of the 2020 - 2024 Action Plan to eradicate terrorism in the region, the Authority appoints **Their Excellencies Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo** President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Government and **Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger** to lead the financial and technical resource mobilisation efforts.

45. With regard to **transnational organised crime**, the Authority reaffirms its concern over the extent of trafficking in counterfeit drugs which have flooded the West African pharmaceutical market. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Authority reaffirms the need for Member States to join the Lome initiative on the establishment of a regulatory framework that would criminalise the trafficking of substandard and falsified medicines in Africa to effectively combat the scourge in the region.

46. Concerning **maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea**, the Authority notes the significant contribution of maritime activities to the economic and social development of Member States in the region, and expresses concern at the increase in the number of illegal activities at sea, including maritime piracy, toxic waste dumping, and illegal, unreported and

unregulated fishing. The Authority urges Member States to fully implement the measures adopted at national, regional and continental levels to ensure maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

47. To that end, the Authority calls on Member States to ratify the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety (Lome Charter), adopted on 15 October 2016, and promote maritime cooperation among Member States. The Authority urgently appeals to host countries of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCCs) and the West African Regional Maritime Security Centre (CRESMAO), to make the necessary administrative and logistics arrangements to ensure the full operationalisation of the Centres, including the provision of accommodation for international staff deployed to the maritime centres in their respective countries. The Authority requests Member States and the Commission to accelerate the implementation of the decisions so adopted.

48. In the context of **conflict prevention** at national level, the Authority welcomes the significant progress made in the establishment of national early warning centres, and encourages Member States to speed up the operationalisation process of these centers.

49. Regarding the **humanitarian situation** in the region, the Authority notes the worsening situation in 2020 as a result of the combined effect of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, insecurity in some regions particularly in the Sahel, natural disasters and high food prices.

50. The Authority commends the efforts made by the ECOWAS Commission to mitigate the impact of the humanitarian crisis in the region, through the provision of humanitarian assistance and support for Member States' programmes and initiatives. It calls on Member States to take the necessary steps to address the humanitarian crisis, particularly by enhancing social protection for vulnerable and at-risk groups.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

51. The Authority invites the African Union Commission (AUC) to convene its next Summit by videoconference and hold the election of the Chair and Commissioners of the AUC virtually.

52. The Authority pays glowing tribute to H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger, who is attending the Summit for the last time as Head of State, for his strong belief and efforts to promote economic integration, as well as to consolidate democracy, and regional peace and security. The Authority remains forever grateful to him for his involvement and the actions carried out within the framework of the ECOWAS Single Currency Project. It commends the initiatives he led during his two terms as President of the Republic of Niger. These initiatives contributed to the economic and social development, as well as to the peaceful opening up of his country, particularly through the development of required infrastructure. The Authority expresses its gratitude to him for having accepted to serve the Community as Champion of ECOWAS for the mobilisation of financial and technical resources for the 2020 - 2024 Action Plan for the eradication of terrorism in the region.

## **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT SUMMIT**

53. The Heads of State and Government decide to hold the next Ordinary Session in Accra, Republic of Ghana at a date to be fixed, after consultation.

54. The Heads of State and Government express sincere appreciation to **H. E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo**, President of the Republic of Ghana, Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, for his leadership in steering the affairs of the Community.

**Done via Videoconference, this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January 2021**

**THE AUTHORITY**

