

COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

ECOWAS COMMISSION



COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO

Ref.: ECW/CEG/ABJ/35

THIRTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AUTHORITY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Abuja, 19 December 2008

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

DECEMBER 2008

INTRODUCTION

1. The thirty-fifth ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 19 December 2008 under the chairmanship of **His Excellency Blaise Compaore**, President of Faso, current Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS.

2. The following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives attended the session:

- His Excellency **Dr. Thomas Yayi Boni**
President of the Republic of Benin
- His Excellency **Blaise Compaore**
President of Burkina Faso
- His Excellency **Laurent Gbagbo**
President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
- His Excellency **Alhaj Yahya Abdul-Aziz JAMMEH**
President of the Republic of The Gambia
- His Excellency **John Agyekum KUFUOR**
President of the Republic of Ghana
- His Excellency **João Bernardo VIEIRA**
President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau
- His Excellency **Amadou Toumani TOURE**
President of the Republic of Mali
- His Excellency **Umaru Musa YAR'ADUA**
President, Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

- His Excellency **Ernest Bai KOROMA**
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
- His Excellency **Faure Essozimna GNASSINGBE**
President of the Togolese Republic
- His Excellency **José Maria NEVES**
Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde
- His Excellency **Dr Ahmed Tidiane SOUARE**
Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea
- His Excellency **Joseph BOKAI**
Vice President of the Republic of Liberia
- His Excellency **Seini OUMAROU**
Prime Minister of the Republic of Niger
- His Excellency **Abdou Aziz SOW**
Minister of Information, Relations with Institutions and NEPAD of the Republic of Senegal

3. The following personalities also attended the 35th session as observers:

- Excellency **Mr. Jean PING**, President of the African Union Commission
- His Excellency **Mr. Said DJINNIT**, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa
- His Excellency **Youssef OUEDRAOGO**, Representative of the President of the African Development Bank (ADB)
- Mr. **Christophe Joseph DABIRE**, Representative of the President of the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)

4. During the session, the annual report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, as well as the reports on the 61st ordinary session of the Council of Ministers and the 25th meeting of the Mediation and Security Council, were presented to the Heads of State and Government. The reports focused mainly on the Community integration and development

programmes, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), institutional issues, peace and regional security.

5. The Authority took note of the reports and expressed appreciation to the Council of Ministers for the quality of its work and for the relevance of its recommendations. The Heads of State and Government approved in particular the recommendations relating to the adoption of the draft texts prepared by the sectoral ministerial meetings. They further thanked the President of the Commission, **Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas**, for his contribution to the implementation of the Community integration programmes and reaffirmed their commitment to the development of the region through the consolidation of the ECOWAS integration process.

6. The Authority considered in detail the following specific issues:

A. INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PERFORMANCE
OF THE WEST AFRICAN ECONOMY

7. The Heads of State and Government expressed great concern about the financial crisis whose effects, together with the rising oil and food prices, could lead to a reduction in the regional growth rate.

8. Considering that this crisis constitutes a danger to the development initiatives of Member States in particular, as it can lead to a drop in commodity prices, foreign direct investments and remittances by West African migrant workers, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the need for a regional strategy designed to minimize such risks, and urged Member States to strengthen the management and structural reform of their economies.

9. The Authority also called for better global economic governance and launched an appeal to the international community to ensure that the African Continent is more involved in international meetings on monetary and development issues.

B. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)

10. The Authority expressed satisfaction with the positive outcome of the EPA negotiations and particularly with the efforts made by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions in the monitoring of the interim agreements, the definition of the EPA development programme, the preparation of a regional list of sensitive products within the framework of the market access offer, and in the formulation of the text of the agreement.

11. Reaffirming their commitment to concluding a fair and development-friendly EPA, the Heads of State and Government directed both Commissions to fast-track the negotiation process to ensure the signing of a regional agreement with the European Union by the deadline of June 2009. To this end, the Authority urged the European Union to take into account West Africa's development concerns relating to supply and market access capacities, as well as to the financing of the fiscal and economic adjustment costs to be incurred under the EPA.

C. COMMON MARKET AND FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS

12. The Heads of State and Government noted with satisfaction the efforts being made by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions to create the 35%-rate fifth tariff band, reclassify some products and finalise the list of Type B exceptions in order to enable the adoption of an ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET).

13. Underscoring the relevance of the CET to the establishment of the customs union and consolidation of the common market, the Authority called on the two Commissions to pursue their close collaboration with a view to the effective establishment of the union. Consequently, the Heads of State and Government urged Member States to take all necessary measures to implement effectively the ECOWAS Protocols on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment.

D. TRANSPORT PROGRAMME

14. The Authority expressed appreciation to **His Excellency Laurent Gbagbo**, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire for his key role in the implementation of transport infrastructure development activities in the region. It commended the relevant conclusions of the various sectoral meetings held in this regard and approved the Action Plan, as well as the resolutions pertaining to the different sub-sectors (railway, air and maritime transport.) and aimed at improving regional infrastructure and services.

15. In this regard, the Heads of State and Government requested that a joint meeting of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Transport and another meeting of Ministers of Transport with airlines be organised with a view to finding concrete ways and means of achieving this objective.

16. The Heads of State and Government endorsed the creation of the Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU) in order to endow ECOWAS with capacities for the preparation of bankable projects through public and private financial resources. They also urged the Commission to work with the ADB as project leader, to organise a donors

round table aimed at bringing lasting solutions to the problem of financing of the above-mentioned action plan.

17. The Authority acknowledged the need to regulate air traffic in the region and expressed support for the promoters of the «Africa Sky» project in their planned launch of air traffic activities scheduled for the first quarter of 2009. The Authority however hoped that this new company would collaborate with existing airlines.

E. ENERGY PROGRAMME

18. The Authority expressed satisfaction with the willingness of **His Excellency Joao Bernado Vieira**, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, to coordinate the efforts of ECOWAS and UEMOA in the area of regional energy infrastructure development. To ensure sustainable electric power supply in the region, the Authority adopted an ECOWAS/UEMOA joint Action Plan focused on the regional priority projects. It also approved the creation of a Regional Centre for Renewal Energy and Energy Efficiency (ReCREEE) headquartered in Praia, Republic of Cape Verde.

19. To facilitate increased trade through low electricity costs and security of sources of supply, the Heads of State and Government endorsed the establishment of an ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) with headquarters in Accra, Republic of Ghana. They called for a public/private partnership in the implementation of the aforementioned plan and invited the relevant technical and financial partners to support the region's energy development programmes.

20. The Heads of State and Government recognised the need for the Commission to formulate an emergency programme in response to the various crises. They invited the Commission and the international community to establish an energy emergency programme for Bissau. Similarly, with regard to the formulation of community development programmes, the Authority directed the Commission to take the peculiar case of Cape Verde into account.

F. COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

21. Taking into account the adoption of the regional offensive for food production and against hunger, the Authority requested Member States to finalise the preparation of their national agricultural investment programmes and called on the international community to support Member States' initiatives in this domain.

22. In this context, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged the need for a structured political dialogue between the region and its partners on the financing of agriculture. To this end, they urged the Commission to effectively monitor the high-level meeting held in Paris on 9 December 2008, whose results will lead to the holding of a donors' meeting on the financing of the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP).

23. To ensure that environmental concerns are effectively taken into account, the Heads of State and Government adopted the ECOWAS Environment Policy and the policies relating to water resources in West Africa. They called on Member States and the Commission to effectively implement these policies, in synergy with other sectoral policies.

G. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

24. Within the framework of the mobilisation of the region against illicit drug trafficking, the Authority adopted a Political Declaration and a Regional Action Plan on this scourge, organised crime and drug consumption. It directed the Commission to prepare an implementation plan and called on development partners to support it financially. In particular, the Heads of State and Government appealed to Member States to take necessary measures at the highest level, to ensure the implementation of the national action plans against the drug scourge.

25. As a way of promoting gender equity and equality in the region and the West African youth, the Heads of State and Government adopted the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) and the ECOWAS Youth and Sports Policy. Furthermore, they approved the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan of the West African Health Organisation (WAHO).

H. INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

26. The Heads of State and Government commended the efforts being made by the Commission to observe the 40/60 ratio (operation/programme) in order to ensure efficiency in the implementation of Community programmes. While urging Member States to honour their commitment to implementing the provisions of the Protocol on the Community Levy, the Authority urged ECOWAS institutions to improve their administrative and financial management systems.

27. Within the framework of the replacement of the members of the Community Court of Justice whose terms of office expire on 29 January 2009, the Heads of State and Government approved the appointment of three (3) judges, namely:

- **Mrs Clotilde Medegan Nougbodé**, Republic of Benin;
- **Mr Benfeito Mosso Ramos**, Republic of Cape Verde;
- **Mr Elian Monsédjouéni Potey**, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

28. In addition, they endorsed the support of the Community for **Dr Kandeh Yumkella**, a national of Sierra Leone, to be re-elected to the post of Director General of UNIDO, and the candidature of **Dr K.F. Nwanze**, a Nigerian citizen, for the post of President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

I. REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

29. The Authority expressed satisfaction with the improved security situation in the region and commended the efforts of the Commission and Member States in the areas of preventive diplomacy, promotion of political dialogue and conflict management and resolution. Within the framework of the consolidation of democratic processes and good governance, the Authority expressed appreciation to the Member States that have subscribed to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and encouraged the rest of the Member States to do so.

30. Committed to the Bamako Declaration on Democracy and Good Governance, the Heads of State and Government strongly condemned the recent assassination attempt on **His Excellency Joao Bernardo Vieira**, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau. The Authority encouraged the Commission to take all necessary measures to ensure the formulation of the Action Plan on the reform of the defence and security sectors and the organization of a conference on Guinea Bissau to mobilize resources in support of the Plan.

31. Concerning the **situation in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire**, the Authority noted with satisfaction the entrenchment of the peace process in accordance with the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed in 2007. The Authority appealed to all the parties to work together towards removing the difficulties to the electoral process, especially the preparation of voters' lists and more importantly the identification and registration of voters. To this end, the Heads of State and Government invited all the Ivorian political actors to cooperate to ensure the conduct of free, fair and transparent presidential elections as soon as possible. They therefore renewed their appeal to the international community to continue lending assistance to the Ivorian Government to secure financial resources for the emergency crisis resolution activities.

32. With regard to **the situation in the Republic of Guinea**, the Heads of State and Government reiterated their commitment to the internal stability of the country and to the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections within the shortest possible time frame. They

expressed delight with the time-table prepared by the Guinean authorities for the organization of legislative elections in May 2009. To promote dialogue, the Authority appealed to the ECOWAS mediator, **His Excellency Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida**, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to resume his goodwill missions with a view to involving all the political actors in Guinea in efforts to return normalcy to the country.

33. Concerned about the **security situation in the Sahel-Sahara** belt, the Authority reaffirmed its full support to the Governments of Mali and Niger in their efforts to preserve peace, security and the territorial integrity of their respective countries. Consequently, the Heads of State and Government encouraged the holding of the sub-regional conference on peace, stability, security and development in the Sahel-Sahara region, in order to address issues on cross-border crimes and terrorism affecting the region.

34. In this regard, the Authority took note of the information that only six Member States (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) had deposited the instruments of ratification of the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons and their related materials. Consequently, the Authority appealed to the remaining Member States to ratify the Convention with diligence for it to come into force.

35. Encouraged by the effective establishment of the ECOWAS Stand-by Force, the logistics depots in Sierra Leone, and the humanitarian depot in Mali, the Heads of State and Government urged the Commission to continue the validation of the remaining components of the ECOWAS Stand-by Force and the establishment of support structures for peace operations through greater involvement of Member States.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

36. The Authority expressed its gratitude to all ECOWAS development partners for their unflinching support for the attainment of ECOWAS objectives and for their interest in the development of the West Africa region, as well as to the consolidation of regional peace and security. In particular, the Heads of State and Government expressed delight at the signing by West Africa and the European Union, of the 10th EDF regional strategy paper on 15 November 2008 for a total sum of nearly 600 million euro.

37. The Heads of State and Government also commended the consolidation of the partnership between ECOWAS and the People's Republic of China and congratulated the Chinese authorities on the success of the first ECOWAS/China Economic and Trade Forum held on 24 and 25 September 2008 in Beijing. Furthermore, the Authority encouraged the Commission to seek or strengthen cooperation with new partners from emerging countries, such as Brazil, India, Turkey.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AUTHORITY

38. The Heads of State and Government elected **His Excellency Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua**, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government for a period of one year.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SUMMIT

39. The next ordinary session of the Summit of Heads of State and Government will be held in June 2009.

TRIBUTE TO HIS EXCELLENCY BLAISE COMPAORE, PRESIDENT OF FASO

40. The Heads of State and Government commended the creative diplomacy displayed by **His Excellency Blaise Compaoré**, President of Faso, in the enhancement of the security situation in the region and in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, in particular. While expressing their deep appreciation to him for his personal involvement and wise leadership in the consolidation of the community construction process, the Heads of State and Government requested the President of Faso to continue his mediation initiatives in his capacity as facilitator of the inter-Ivoirian direct dialogue.

TRIBUTE TO HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN AGYEKUM KUFUOR, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

41. The Heads of State and Government paid glowing tribute to **His Excellency John Kufuor**, President of the Republic of Ghana, for his great contribution to the entrenchment of democracy in Ghana and to the stability of the region. The Authority, in particular, commended the political and economic reforms carried out by him over the last eight years and the exemplary leadership displayed in the quest for peace and security in the region and in the consolidation of the regional integration process.

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VOTE OF THANKS

The Heads of State and Government expressed their profound gratitude to **His Excellency Umaru Musa Yar'Adua**, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for the generous and traditional African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Abuja. The Authority wished the people of Nigeria happiness and prosperity.

DONE AT ABUJA, THIS 19TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2008

THE AUTHORITY