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**THIRTY-FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE
AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Abuja, 23 June 2008

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

INTRODUCTION

The Thirty-fourth 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 23 June 2008 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso and current ECOWAS Chairman.

The following Heads of State and Government and duly-accredited representatives participated in the session:

- **His Excellency Dr. Thomas Boni YAYI**
President of the Republic of Benin.
- **His Excellency Blaise COMPAORÉ**
President of Faso.
- **His Excellency Laurent GBAGBO**
President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.
- **His Excellency Alhaji (Dr.) Yahya A.J.J. JAMMEH**
President of the Republic of The Gambia.
- **His Excellency João Bernardo VIEIRA**
President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.
- **Her Excellency Ellen JOHNSON-SIRLEAF**
President of the Republic of Liberia.
- **His Excellency Alhaji Umaru Musa YAR'ADUA, G.C.F.R.**
President and 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 GNASSINGBÉ**
President of the Togolese Republic.
- **His Excellency Mr. Jorge BORGES**
Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy, Growth and Competitiveness of the Republic of Cape Verde
- **His Excellency Akwasi OSEI-AGYEI**
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Regional Integration and NEPAD of the Republic of Ghana
- **His Excellency Dr. Aliou Badara MACALOU**
Minister of Malians Abroad and African Integration of the Republic of Mali

- **Her Excellency Mrs. Aïchatou MINDAOUDOU**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Niger
- **His Excellency M. Mamadou DIOP**
Minister of Trade of the Republic of Senegal
- **His Excellency Dr. Cheick Abdoul CAMARA**
Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea to Nigeria

The following dignitaries also attended the session as Observers:

- His Excellency Saïd Djinnit, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in West Africa and Head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA).
- His Excellency Soumaila Cissé, President of UEMOA Commission

The **opening ceremony** was marked by the following speeches:

- a welcome statement by host President, His Excellency Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, *GCFR*, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- the opening address by His Excellency Blaise COMPAORÉ, President of Burkina Faso and current ECOWAS Chairman;
- an address by Her Excellency Mrs Ellen JOHNSON-SIRLEAF, President of the Republic of Liberia;
- a statement by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA); and
- a statement by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS.

The Heads of State and Government decided at their working session, to use the addresses and statements as working documents.

During the **working session** the Summit reaffirmed its commitment to the economic and integrated development of the West African region within the scope of the ECOWAS Vision 2020.

The Authority considered and adopted the interim report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission as well as the reports of the 60th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and the joint Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture, Finance and Trade on the rising cost of food prices within the Community.

Reviewing the **performance of the West African economy**, the Authority noted with satisfaction the improved macroeconomic management as well as improving governance situation in the Member States. In this regard, it also noted that this development was sustained in the first half of 2008 in spite of the global financial turbulence and other negative exogenous shocks on the regional economy.

The Authority, however, expressed concern over the region's slow pace in attaining the MDGs, particularly in the light of the persistent rise in the price of crude oil and petroleum products, as well as food prices, which has had adverse budgetary implications on the economies of most of the Member States. It therefore called on oil-exporting Member States to show more solidarity with their non oil-exporting counterparts in order to help reduce the weight of this burden.

The Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of regional infrastructure for the scaling up of the economic development and integration process. In that regard, they designated their Excellencies Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and João Bernardo Vieira, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau to coordinate the efforts of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions in the development of regional infrastructure, transport and energy respectively. They also directed that the Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU) be made operational. The Heads of State and Government agreed to discuss at their next Summit recommendations to be proposed by the two Heads of State.

The Authority further directed the ECOWAS Commission to deploy relevant efforts to ensure the smooth implementation of the ECOWAS/UEMOA Joint White Paper on Regional Access to Energy as one of the key measures for accelerating the attainment of the MDGs.

To that end, it appealed to ECOWAS partners to support ECOWAS efforts aimed at mobilising relevant resources, particularly investments in the appropriate energy infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.

In order to make the **West African Common Market** a reality for the benefit of its peoples, the Authority urged the Member States to effectively implement the protocol on **free movement of persons and goods, the right of residence and establishment**, ensure the harmonisation of the ECOWAS passport and guarantee equal treatment of refugees and other ECOWAS citizens. It also requested the ECOWAS Commission and the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) to harmonise the establishment of rules and mechanisms required for the standardisation and certification of products originating from the Community in order to strengthen the mechanism relating to the facilitation of trade between the Member States.

The Authority took note of the on-going efforts by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions to finalise the study commissioned on the creation of a fifth band and the reclassification of certain products. It stressed the importance and urgency of the establishment of the CET. It also called upon the Council of Ministers to direct the Joint Committee responsible for harmonising the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET), to determine the rate of the fifth band, and if necessary, establish a list of products to be contained therein. It also called on Member States to act in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation in order to conclude a development-oriented CET.

Regarding the West Africa – European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the Authority took note of the progress made in the negotiations, notably in the preparation of the regional liberalization schedule, formulation of development programmes and drafting of the text of the Agreement.

Recalling the principle of a regional agreement covering all West African countries, and reaffirming their commitment to a participatory and unified approach to the negotiations, the Authority took note of the progress made in harmonization of some provisions of the interim agreements. It noted that the interim agreements would cease to exist upon the signature of the regional comprehensive EPA.

The Authority directed the ECOWAS Commission to take all necessary measures to finalise the outstanding tasks required to conclude a fair, balanced and development-oriented agreement which takes into consideration the concerns of West Africa's population.

On the current **global food crisis**, the Authority noted with concern the prevailing rising cost of food prices and expressed satisfaction at efforts made individually by Member States to address this challenge. It also commended the ECOWAS Commission for facilitating an emergency regional consultative meeting on the issue.

While endorsing the recommendations of the said meeting regarding emergency, medium and long-term measures needed to ensure food security in the region, the Heads of State and Government noted that the food crisis provided a window of opportunity for ECOWAS Member States to redouble efforts to effectively implement the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy and Regional Strategy for short-, medium- and long-term food security.

It also requested the ECOWAS Commission to continue to dialogue with ECOWAS development partners and potential investors in order to help complement ECOWAS and Member States own initiatives to ensure food security for the region.

Also reviewing the general **security situation in the region**, the Authority noted with satisfaction the improving trend. It expressed delight at the progress made in the peace and national reconciliation process in the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, with the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement on Côte d'Ivoire. The Authority called on the international community to continue to support the efforts of Côte d'Ivoire and all other ECOWAS member States in the holding of elections. In particular, it drew attention to the funding gap that still exists for the Ivorian elections and appealed to the donor partners to provide funding urgently in order to ensure the holding of elections on 30th November 2008.

The Heads of State and Government resolved to continue to consolidate peace and good governance in the Community. They lauded the consolidation of Regional stability through the organization of credible legislative and presidential elections in the Member States. To this end, the Authority welcomed the creation of the West African Network of Electoral Commissions, facilitated by the ECOWAS Commission and launched earlier this year in Conakry.

The Authority took note of the pending elections scheduled to hold later this year in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone, and urged all stakeholders in these ECOWAS Member States to ensure the conduct of credible, transparent, free and fair elections, so vital to the consolidation of democracy and development in the region.

On security and cross-border crime in the Sahel-Sahara zone, the Heads of State and Government condemned the continued armed attacks against legitimate security forces in the North of Mali and Niger and welcomed the holding of a regional conference on the comprehensive development of the Sahel-Saharan zone.

The Summit further deplored the on-going violence in the Niger Delta region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and expressed its solidarity with the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It applauded the policies initiated by His Excellency Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for a comprehensive development of the Niger Delta region and called upon the militants to desist from all acts of violence and embrace the path of dialogue and understanding to address the problems of the area.

The Authority also expressed satisfaction that the regional conference on drug trafficking has now been scheduled to hold in October 2008. It called for the support of the UN Office on Drug Control (UNODC), UNOWA, the UN Office in Guinea Bissau (UNOGBIS), the EU and other partners to help ensure a successful regional conference.

Regarding the administrative and institutional measures being taken to fast track the creation of a regional customs union, the Authority endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers establishing a Department of Customs under the purview of the Commissioner for Trade and Customs at the ECOWAS Commission.

In anticipation of the end of the four year tenure of the Director General and Deputy Director General of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA) on 30 April 2009 and 11 January 2009 respectively, the Authority allocated the posts of Director General and Deputy Director General to Nigeria and Senegal respectively. With this allocation, the Authority

directed that henceforth, Supplementary Protocol A/SP.1/06/06 amending the Revised Treaty relating to the term of office of Statutory Appointees, is in full force.

Regarding the post of Commissioner for Human Development and Gender allocated to the Republic of Senegal, the Heads of State and Government endorsed the appointment by the Council of Ministers of **Dr. Adrienne Diop**.

The Authority also directed the ECOWAS Commission to undertake a study to be presented to them at their next session on an appropriate structure of the Commission that ensures effective implementation of community decisions and maintains the ratio of 40:60 with regard to administrative and programme costs. It also called for clear rules of procedure for the functioning of community organs.

Finally, the Authority expressed its gratitude to all **development partners** of ECOWAS for their support towards the realisation of the Community objectives and programmes, capacity building of ECOWAS institutions as well as enhancing peace and security in the region.

It drew attention to the continuing need for support towards post-conflict reconstruction in certain member States and expressed the hope that the Partners Forum on Liberia scheduled to hold on June 26th to 27th, 2008 in Berlin, Germany, will be well attended by development partners.

The Authority also called on partners to support the forth-coming ECOWAS Conference on Climate Change scheduled for Cotonou on 27th to 31st October 2008.

In the particular case of India, the Authority expressed deep appreciation to the Government and people of India for announcing in April 2008 the facility for duty free imports from African LDCs into India, among other initiatives, and urged ECOWAS LDCs to take full advantage of this offer for the benefit of increased trade exchanges between West Africa and India.

Regarding the ECOWAS/China Economic and Trade Forum planned for 23 to 26 September 2008 in Beijing, the Authority further urged Member States to effectively prepare with their respective private sectors in order to derive maximum benefits from this platform.

The Summit endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Gilbert Houngbo of Togo for the position of President of the International Fund for the Development of Agriculture (IFAD).

The next ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government will hold in December 2008 in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria.



VOTE OF THANKS

The Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meeting on the occasion of the Thirty-fourth session of their Authority expressed their deep gratitude to His Excellency Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua *GCFR*, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the warm and African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Abuja. The Authority wished the people of Nigeria happiness and prosperity.

Done in Abuja, this 23rd day of June 2008

CHAIRMAN OF THE AUTHORITY