



## **CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2022**

### ***GENDER EQUALITY TODAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW***

#### **A MESSAGE FROM**

**H.E. JEAN-CLAUDE KASSI BROU**

**PRESIDENT OF THE ECOWAS COMMISSION**

1. Ladies and Gentlemen,
2. On this 8th of March 2022 **International Women's Day**, I would like to join all those, male and female alike, who are celebrating women and girls the world over.
3. This International Day is a unique opportunity for us to celebrate all the women.
4. I would like to commend the invaluable contribution of women to peace and development in the world and to building a better future for Humanity. I should also like to congratulate the African women, and women of the ECOWAS sub region in particular, for their tireless effort towards the development of their respective communities, and for their daily work to improve the living conditions and wellbeing of their respective families.
5. I would further like to avail myself of this opportunity to especially congratulate the female staff of ECOWAS Institutions, Departments and Agencies for their total commitment to the service of the Community as well



as their involvement and active role in the drive towards the attainment of sustainable development in our sub region.

6. The United Nation's chosen theme for this year's International Women's Day celebration, **Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow**, could not be more appropriate.
7. This celebration is taking place at a time when Humanity is still struggling to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic which struck blindly and has had devastating socio-economic impact. It is a time when Humanity is also faced with numerous other major challenges including violent conflicts and, unfortunately, an accelerating climate change.
8. While we celebrate women, it is important to reflect seriously on factors that continue to undermine the attainment of gender equality and women empowerment at every level of society, factors that encourage discrimination against women and girls from all spheres of society and systematically place them at the bottom of the development ladder.
9. These inequalities are evident in the marginalisation of women and girls, the absence of opportunities to participate effectively in development processes or reap the dividends thereof, the feminisation of poverty, illiteracy, and child marriage. Also, violence against women, sexual abuse, the low rate of enrolment and education of the girl-child are some of the hindrances to their development.
10. The relationship between gender equality and sustainable development is indisputable. This explains the growing global consensus on the value that gender equality and women's empowerment bring to the social, economic and political development of society. Studies have shown that women are

8





disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters. Women make up approximately 80% of the world's environmentally displaced people and are more likely to be negatively affected in the event of a natural disaster.

11. In our West African region, climate change is increasingly affecting rainfall. It increases the frequency and intensity of climate shocks and exacerbates environmental degradation. Climate change has a negative impact on food security and livelihoods and exacerbates forced migration and conflicts relating to the scarcity of natural resources. It further weakens women, girls and people living with disabilities, who are the most vulnerable segments of our communities. ECOWAS is mobilised when the need arises to provide them with humanitarian assistance and show solidarity.
12. Similarly, West Africa's dependence on agriculture makes our region extremely vulnerable to climate change and exposes rural women who depend on agriculture and natural resources for their economic activities to the hazards of climate fluctuations.
13. Aware of this situation, the ECOWAS Commission provides innovative solutions to the devastating effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters on the West African population, especially on women, girls and other vulnerable segments of the population.
14. Key policy frameworks and strategies adopted in this area include the ECOWAS Hydromet Programme; the Flood Risk Management Strategy; the Gender-Responsive Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction; the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy; and the Supplementary Act on



Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region.

15. Therefore, it is necessary, within the framework of sustainable development, that gender equality and women's empowerment be promoted in a holistic way, including through gender mainstreaming in regional integration and climate change policies, strategies and programmes. This includes placing women at the centre of the transition to a green economy, strengthening the role of women in biodiversity conservation and sustainable food and agricultural systems, and ending violence against women. The ECOWAS Commission will continue to show commitment and leadership in gender mainstreaming in all ECOWAS policies, strategies and programmes.

16. Finally, I would like to congratulate all West African women and especially the female staff of the ECOWAS Institutions for their support and dedication to regional integration. We appreciate and cherish them all.

17. I thank you for your kind attention and wish you all an excellent International Women's Day.

**Long live the advancement of women's rights,**

**Long live ECOWAS.**