

48th ANNIVERSARY OF ECOWAS: A MESSAGE FROM H.E. DR. OMAR ALIEU TOURAY, PRESIDENT OF THE ECOWAS COMMISSION TO THE STAFF OF ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS



1. Every year on the 28th of May we celebrate ECOWAS Day to honour the vision of our founding fathers and the huge sacrifice of our Member States and citizens in creating a single socio-economic and political space for peace and prosperity for all. For 48 years today, our sense of community has remained solid in the face of challenges, and our commitment for inclusive and sustainable development has remained strong.
2. We are grateful to our Heads of State and Government, who have maintained a resolute and consistent stand on the vision of our founding fathers, investing all the necessary resources to preserve the Community and forge a solidarity for the advancement of our socio-economic integration agenda and the pursuit of peace, security, and stability.
3. For the Managements of the ECOWAS Institutions, the job is already cut out for us as the key issues confronting our region are palpable. In the area of peace and security, we are confronted with the persistence of violent conflicts and terrorism, and we live daily with the sad news of loss of lives and property. We have seen many election cycles in our Member States, but violence continues to mar the successes recorded. In Mali and Burkina Faso, the intensity of the violence is concerning. We condemn in strong terms the violence, sympathise with the affected families and the authorities. We reiterate our call for international support to our region in the fight against terrorism and other forms of organised crime. The humanitarian situation is growing because of not only the conflicts but also climate change and environmental degradation. The global economic crisis, which manifests in the form of soaring prices of food and fuel, is another challenge that tests our resolve for collective security and self-reliance. Free movement of persons, goods and services within our community is still hindered by artificial barriers, infrastructure deficits, tariff and non-tariff barriers.
4. We have made tackling these challenges the focus of our work and planning. The 4x4 Strategic Objectives of the ECOWAS Management were designed to respond to the challenges in our community and exploit opportunities for growth and development. For the strategic objective 1 on Enhanced peace and security, we are Implementing the ECOWAS Action Plan against Terrorism and working to strengthen the ECOWAS standby force to support the fight against terrorism and unconstitutional changes in government. We are also tackling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, enhancing the capacity of our member states against cyber-attacks, operationalising the maritime security architecture with the full operationalisation of the three maritime surveillance and patrol zones. Under our strategic objective 2, relating to good governance and political stability, we have doubled our preventive diplomacy engagements in countries undergoing elections, and sustained the monitoring and support to the political transitions in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea. With respect to deepening regional integration, which is covered under our strategic objective three, the efforts revolve around the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as trade facilitation through the work of the Presidential Tasks Force on ETLs, and many bilateral engagements at the highest level. Furthermore, we have focused more on improving food security, alleviating the plights of internally displaced persons and refugees in our region, building transport and energy infrastructure to attain the 4th strategic objective on inclusive and sustainable development.
5. Capable institutions and equitable partnerships are vital enablers of our work and performance. In this regard, the reform of our institutional processes and resources is on track. Thus far, we are addressing staff complaints and disputes, implementing the outcome of the skills audit, including giving priority to internal candidates for recruitment into vacant positions. The well being and welfare of the staff will continue to receive the due attention of Management. I am particularly glad to see the role of the ECOWAS Amazons in mobilizing action towards gender equality within our institutions. The vision and goals of the Amazons are legitimate and in line with the international agenda for gender equity in workspaces. As Management, we are totally aligned with this goal.
6. In addition, we are very grateful for the sustained support of our development partners. They have remained consistent in working with us to promote development and tackle challenges in various areas of mutual interest. We have signed additional financing agreements for the realisation of our set objectives. We remain open to more collaborations and enhance partnerships.
7. Going forward, we intend to make our work more visible to our citizens, implement projects with direct impact on their lives and livelihood and become more accountable to our policy organs.
8. I thank all the staff and members of the management of ECOWAS institutions for their commitment and support. As we recommit ourselves to serving first and foremost the ideals of our community **Towards shared Prosperity**, I wish everyone Happy Anniversary and pray that we see more peace, security, stability, and prosperity in our community.
9. Thank you and long live ECOWAS!