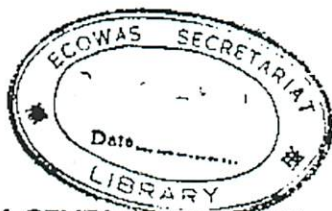


ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES

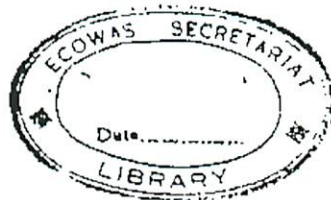
COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES
ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST



**TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE ECOWAS
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Accra 19th December 2003

FINAL **C**OMMUNIQUE



I. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-seventh session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was held in Accra, on 19 December 2003, under the Chairmanship of His Excellency, John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and current Chairman of ECOWAS.

The following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives were present at the session:

- His Excellency Mathieu Kérékou
President of the Republic of Benin;
- His Excellency Laurent Gbagbo
President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor
President of the Republic of Ghana
- His Excellency Henrique Perreira Rosa
President of the Republic of Guinée-Bissau
- His Excellency Amadou Toumani Touré
President of the Republic of Mali
- His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- His Excellency Maitre Abdoulaye Wade
President of the Republic of Senegal
- His Excellency Ahmed Teejan Kabbah
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
- His Excellency General Gnassingbe Eyadema
President of the Togolese Republic
- His Excellency Gyude Bryant
President of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia
- His Excellency José Maria Neves
Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde
- His Excellency Ernest Paramanga Yonfi
Prime Minister Representing the President of Faso
- His Excellency Lamine Sidime
Prime Minister, Representative of the President of the Republic of Guinea

- Mr. Edward Sinjate, Representative of the President of the Republic of The Gambia
- Mr. Adamou Moumouni Djermakoye, Representative of the President of the Republic of Niger

The following dignitaries also attended the twenty-seventh session of the Authority as observers:

- His Excellency, Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairman of the African Union Commission;
- Mr. Moussa Touré, President of the UEMOA Commission;
- His Excellency, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation;
- His Excellency, Dr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa;
- Madam Carole Bellamy, Director General of UNICEF;
- Mr. Abdouille Janneh, Representative of the Administrator of UNDP.

A list of participants is attached as an annex.

II. Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony featured the welcome address of Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS Executive Secretary and the opening address of His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana and current Chairman of ECOWAS, as well as the vote of thanks moved by His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Authority decided to use these addresses as working documents. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to the consolidation of regional peace and security and to the regional integration process, as a means of freeing the peoples of the West African sub-region from the grip of poverty.

Messages of solidarity and support were delivered to the twenty-seventh session of the Authority by His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairman of the African Union Commission, Mrs. Carole Bellamy, Director General of UNICEF, Mr. Ahmadu Ould Abdallah, representing Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation.

Declaration on the West African Child

In view of the serious threat to children as a result of their growing involvement in the armed conflicts of the region, the Authority adopted the Dakar Declaration on the West African Child. The Declaration envisages special measures for the improvement of the lot of the West African child in all aspects of life.

The Heads of State and Government committed themselves to the use of the Peer review mechanism for the monitoring of the measures adopted for better protection of children in the region.

The Authority directed the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat to take necessary measures to enhance the capacity of the Child Protection Unit.

The Heads of States and Government also directed the Executive Secretariat to appoint ECOWAS Ambassadors for the Child.

Accelerating the Regional Integration Process

ECOWAS Programmes

The Authority adopted the reports of the Executive Secretary, the different sessions of the Council of Ministers, and the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The reports focused on the following:

- Establishment of the ECOWAS Common Market;
- Creation of the second monetary zone (WAMZ) and the ECOWAS single monetary zone;
- WTO multilateral trade negotiations, and trade negotiations with the European Union within the framework of economic partnership agreements (EPAs);
- Production sector programmes and infrastructure;
- Human development programmes;
- Administrative and financial matters;

- Institutional matters;
- Regional peace and security.

The Authority took note of the presentation made by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Dr. K. Y. Amoako, on integration and development in West Africa.

The Heads of State and Government followed the presentation with great interest and thanked the ECA Executive Secretary on the quality of his presentation. The paper was followed by a lively debate, after which the Heads of State and Government stressed the need to identify the priorities on which the development efforts of the region should be focused. The Heads of State and Government called on ECOWAS and the ECA to work in collaboration with other development institutions to formulate proposals in this regard.

The ECOWAS Executive Secretary was also directed to prepare regular monthly reports on priority actions on integration for consideration by the cabinet of Ministers of each Member State.

The Authority placed particular emphasis on economic and institutional matters, peace and security.

Economic Matters

NEPAD Implementation

The Heads of State and Government reiterated their commitment to the objectives, orientations and priorities of NEPAD, as the appropriate instrument for the integration and development of the economies of the African continent. The Authority urged the Executive Secretariat and Member States to speed up establishment of NEPAD focal points in all the Member States.

In view of the need to take stock of progress accomplished in the implementation of NEPAD, the Heads of State and Government welcomed the offer from the Republic Niger to host the meeting of Ministers responsible for NEPAD implementation. The Authority thanked development partners for their support in the operationalisation of the regional focal point for NEPAD implementation recently opened at the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat.

The Authority also appealed to the international community, and particularly to our partners of the G8 to make good on the promises they made at the summits of Genoa in 2001, Kananaskis in 2002, and Evian in 2003. They were also reminded to fulfil their undertakings of the Monterrey summit in 2002.

Regional Approach to the Fight against Poverty

The Authority underscored the need for a regional approach to the fight against poverty, in order to create synergy and enhance national programmes within the framework of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

The Heads of State and Government commended the efforts of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, the UEMOA Commission and the World Bank towards the formulation of a regional poverty reduction strategy paper. They requested that the work should be accelerated in order to adopt a regional framework for the fight against poverty.

Post-Cancun Perspectives - Multilateral Trade Negotiations

Referring to the Doha Ministerial Declaration by which members of the WTO undertake to place the needs and interests of developing countries at the centre of multilateral trade negotiations, the Authority expressed its regret at the failure of the Cancun meeting, and stressed the fact that post-Cancun negotiations had been planned to take into account the priorities of developing countries in general, and of African countries in particular.

Acknowledging the importance of cotton for the development of some African countries in general and countries of the ECOWAS region in particular, as well as the urgent need to address the problem of the distortions affecting the international cotton trade, the Authority strongly supported the proposal for a cotton initiative within the WTO by Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad. The Authority stressed the need for special treatment of the cotton issue, separate from the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

The Authority therefore called on the industrialised countries involved to proceed with a total elimination of export subsidies and internal protective measures for cotton production.

The Authority expressed its unqualified support for the creation of a fund to sustain the cotton sector of cotton-producing least developed countries (LDCs), in line with the wishes of the four co-sponsors of the initiative.

In addition, the Authority underscored the need to prevail upon the international financing organisations such as the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank to adapt the conditions for their interventions to the volatility of the raw materials market, and to improve their debt reduction programme for the poorest countries, for the benefit of the African countries.

Negotiations on the Regional Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union

The Authority welcomed the launching on 6 October 2003, of trade negotiations between West Africa and the European Union within the framework of the Cotonou agreement. The Authority stressed that the EPAs should, first and foremost, be an instrument for development in the fight against poverty. The EPAs should therefore be flexible enough to accommodate the low development level of our economies, the economic and social constraints and our limited ability to adapt to the new international environment. The EPAs should also take into account the development priorities of the ECOWAS countries.

The Authority adopted the amended regional negotiating structure which now includes a Ministerial facilitating team composed of the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The Authority took note of the roadmap for the EPA negotiations which was adopted by the Ministerial Monitoring Committee at its meeting on 17 November 2003.

Common Market

The Authority exhorted all Member States to take concrete measures to establish a single regional market in West Africa through the effective implementation of the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme with effect from 1 January 2004. The Authority also called for an acceleration of the preparations towards the adoption of the ECOWAS common external tariff (CET). In this regard the Authority also called on Member States to remove all tariff and non-tariff barriers to the free movement of products of ECOWAS origin. In view of the political will that must underpin the implementation of the scheme, the Heads of State undertook to issue the necessary directives to their respective governments to make the free trade area a reality.

Noting that the lapses observed in the application of the compensation system for loss of customs revenue are one of the major obstacles to the implementation of the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme, the Authority decided to amend the provisions of

Article 6 of the Protocol on the Application of Compensation Procedures. The duration for compensation of lost revenue has now been fixed for a period of three months.

Community Levy

The Authority recalled the decision it took in January 2003 in Dakar concerning the entry into force of the substantive regime of the Community levy as from 1 July 2003. The Authority took note of the measures adopted by the extraordinary session of Council of Ministers in September 2003 for the application of the said decision. It exhorted all Member States to apply the levy without further delay and to ensure the removal of all obstacles to the implementation of the provisions of the relevant protocol. This would ensure that adequate resources are generated for the operational budgets of the ECOWAS institutions and the solidarity fund to be used to promote the balanced development of the regional peace.

Monetary Cooperation Programme

The Authority took note of the progress made towards the creation of a second regional monetary zone comprising the ECOWAS Member States outside the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). It was recalled that the initiative is within the framework of the fast-tracking of the monetary integration process leading to the establishment of the ECOWAS single monetary zone.

The Heads of State and Government stressed the need to deepen the convergence of the macroeconomic policies and performance of Member States in order to increase the credibility of the second monetary zone and the ECOWAS single monetary zone. In this context, they urged all Member States to redouble efforts to fulfil the macroeconomic convergence criteria by improving their public finances and carrying out appropriate structural reforms for expanding the production base.

Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment

The Authority noted with regret the delays in the printing and introduction of the ECOWAS passport, which confers Community citizenship. The Heads of State appealed to those Member States, which have not yet done so, to take necessary measures to introduce this travel document of crucial importance within the shortest possible time.

The Heads of State and Government urged Member States to take all necessary measures to implement the provisions of the protocol on free movement of persons, right of resident and establishment.