

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was marked by the welcome statement of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the opening address of His Excellency, Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger, and current Chairman of ECOWAS and UEMOA, the congratulatory speech of the Heads of State and Government, delivered by His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and current Chairman of the African Union as well as the message of the United Nations Secretary-General and statements of a representative of the private sector Mr. Ibrahim Iddi Ango, President of the Niger Chamber of Commerce, and of two representatives of West African Women leaders Madam Salimata Porquet of Cote d'Ivoire and Madam Iysha Josiah of Sierra Leone.

The Authority agreed that these documents should be used as working documents. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to making ECOWAS an effective instrument for promoting the integration process and for the development of West African economies.

HOMAGE TO THE VICTIMS OF THE 22 OCTOBER 2005 AIR CRASH IN NIGERIA

At the request of the Chairman of the Authority, the participants observed a minute silence in memory of Major-General Cheikh Oumar Diarra, Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security, and all those who died in the 22 October 2005 air crash in Nigeria. They paid special homage to General Diarra for the remarkable work he accomplished in the execution of his duties.

ECOWAS PROGRAMMES

The Authority adopted the annual report of the Executive Secretary, the reports of the two sessions of the Council of Ministers and of the meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The reports focused mainly on regional integration and cooperation programmes, institutional issues, regional peace and security.

EXTERNAL INDEBTEDNESS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGs

The Authority expressed concern about the huge foreign debt of ECOWAS Member States, which impedes development initiatives and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Authority, however, expressed satisfaction at the commitments made by the G8 partners at their last summit in Gleneagles in September 2005 to cancel the external debt of several development countries, including six ECOWAS Member States. It appealed to our development partners to extend the debt cancellation measures to all ECOWAS Member States and relax the terms of eligibility.

The Heads of State and Government urged Member States to improve economic governance through appropriate macro-economic policies and sound structural policies that will make it possible to achieve the economic growth rates necessary for the attainment of the MDGs, in particular, the reduction of poverty by half in the region by 2015.

To this end, the Authority confirmed its commitments to a regional approach in addressing poverty alleviation with a view to creating synergies and strengthening national programmes under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). It directed the Executive Secretariat to finalise the regional Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in association with the UEMOA Commission and the World Bank. It urged Member States to take account of the regional dimension of poverty reduction in their respective national PRSPs.

NEGOTIATION OF ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (EPA)

The Authority stressed the ambitious nature of the on-going EPA negotiations, which are expected to contribute to the structural transformation of West African economies, the improvement of competitiveness and the enhancement of production and supply capacities. The Authority reiterated its position that the EPA should first and foremost be an instrument of development in the fight against poverty. It urged West African negotiators to ensure that the EPA is sufficiently flexible to take into account the low level development of the national economies, the economic and social constraints and the region's limited capacity to adapt to the new global economy.

MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Reiterating the position of the West African region during the recent WTO meeting in Hong Kong, the Authority urged all our partners to honour their commitment to making the Doha round a veritable development round. To that end, it urged the development partners to go beyond the Hong Kong commitments in order to eliminate all forms of internal subsidies for agriculture and cotton. The Heads of

State and Government particularly stressed the imperative need to find a lasting solution to the cotton issue.

MONETARY COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The Authority underscored the need to further deepen the convergence of macro-economic policies and strengthen the performance of Member States in order to give greater credibility to the second monetary zone and the ECOWAS single monetary zone. To that end, the Authority urged all the Member States to redouble their efforts to achieve the macro-economic convergence criteria through stricter budgetary discipline and structural reforms aimed at expanding the production base.

FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS

Desirous of enabling ordinary Community citizens to fully enjoy their membership of the Community, the Authority urged Member States to take all necessary measures to implement the provisions of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment.

ECOWAS PASSPORT

The Heads of State and Government commended the Republics of Benin, Guinea and Senegal for effectively putting into circulation the ECOWAS Passport, which confers Community citizenship on the region's population. They invited the other Member States to take all necessary measures to print and put into circulation this important travel document. In view of the delays encountered in the issuance of the ECOWAS Passport, the Authority decided to extend by two years the transition period, during which the national passports would continue to circulate along-side the ECOWAS Passport.

The Authority urged all Member States to ensure the printing and issuance of the ECOWAS Travel Certificate.

ECOWAS COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Considering that the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) should contribute in a significant manner to improve the food security situation, the fight against poverty, increase rural income, foster economic growth and reduce social inequalities, the Authority welcomed the formulation of a regional agricultural investment programme and stressed the need to undertake concrete actions that would ensure agricultural development. The Authority directed the Council of Ministers to:

- devise and utilize appropriate instruments both within the intra-community cooperation framework and in the economic relations of the Community with the external world (CET, EPA, WTO, etc ..)
- provide the regional agricultural investment programme with adequate Community resources
- undertake external resource mobilization measures with development partners, in association with EBID.

Furthermore, the Authority invited Member States to formulate proposals for combining the implementation of ECOWAP and the NEPAD Detailed African Agricultural Development Programme. There should also be round-tables organized to mobilize the required financial resources.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECOWAS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT INTO A COMMISSION

To enable ECOWAS better play its role in the integration and development process of the region, and to better adapt to the international environment, the Authority decided to transform the Executive Secretariat into a 9-member Commission, headed by a President.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

The Authority received with appreciation the message from the representatives of the West African private sector in which the economic operators declared their desire to play a more active role in the regional integration process. The Heads of State and Government recalled the ECOWAS Treaty provisions concerning the promotion of the private sector in order to build a firm economic base and achieve sustainable development. They welcomed the proposal for the establishment of an ECOWAS Business Council as an advisory body to the decision-making organs of the Community. To this end, the Executive Secretariat was directed to work in close collaboration with all sections of the West African business community to ensure the effective creation and functioning of the proposed Business Council.

REGIONAL STATISTICAL HARMONISATION

The Authority acknowledged the need for a significant improvement of statistics in the region to enhance the operation of the ECOWAS multilateral surveillance mechanism, and more generally, to

improve the basis for decision-making in both private and public sector institutions. Consequently, the Authority adopted a 2006-2010 Statistical Harmonization Programme and directed the Executive Secretary to mobilize the resources needed for its implementation from both internal and external sources. In this connection, the Executive Secretary was authorized to sign a cooperation protocol with the relevant regional institutions to facilitate the development of the regional statistical system. The Authority also adopted the common frameworks for the compilation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and for Consumer Price Indices (CPI) as well as external trade statistics, and enjoined all Member States to ensure an immediate application of these harmonized statistical instruments.

ADOPTION OF ECOWAS COMMON EXTERNAL TARIFF

Heads of State and Government deliberated on the Community objective of creating a customs union, and noted in particular the efforts being made to consolidate the free trade area status that was achieved in 2000. While adopting the ECOWAS Common External Tariff, they noted the various measures that Individual Member States had taken towards the effective application of this common customs regime. The Executive Secretariat was directed to continue its collaboration with the UEMOA Commission to ensure the resolution of all outstanding issues to enable all Member States operate the ECOWAS CET by 31 December 2007, the end of the transition period.

REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

The Authority undertook an in-depth review of the political and security situation in the region. Heads of State and Government expressed general satisfaction with the progress made. They referred in particular to the successful elections that were held in the region during the year, and the positive results achieved with the ECOWAS peace mediation efforts. The Authority resolved to maintain the current momentum of peace processes in West Africa. By so doing, ECOWAS would be able to put an end to all the active conflicts and to focus on its fundamental objective of economic and social development.

On the issue of ECOWAS monitoring of the political and security situation in specific Member States, the Authority concluded as follows:

Cote d'Ivoire

The Authority welcomed the progress made in the peace process under the auspices of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. Heads of State and Government expressed satisfaction at the achievements made in the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1633 by the designation of Mr. Charles Konan Banny as Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government. Noting the continuing efforts for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1633, the Authority stressed the need for ECOWAS close involvement and leadership of the mechanism for monitoring its implementation.

Liberia

The Authority expressed its appreciation at the positive evolution of the situation in Liberia and warmly congratulated Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President-elect of Liberia. The Heads of State and Government resolved to take all necessary measures to guarantee the durability of the peace process in this critical post-electoral phase. They called on the international community and the UN to speedily establish the Peace-Building Commission (PBC). Pending the operationalisation of the proposed commission, they appealed to the international community to provide all necessary financial and logistic support to ensure the process of reintegration of ex-combatants and the reconstruction of Liberia.

The Authority commended the ECOWAS Mediator General Abdulsalami Abubakar for his relentless efforts in support of the peace process in Liberia.

Guinea Bissau

The Authority expressed satisfaction with the ECOWAS peace efforts in Guinea-Bissau. Heads of State and Government welcomed the successful conduct of the elections and called on the political parties to avoid actions that could jeopardize the progress achieved. The Authority emphasized the necessity to hold a donor round-table in February 2006 for Guinea Bissau to mobilize the resources needed for the reconstruction of the country. It called on the Executive Secretary and the development partners to remain seized of the situation in Guinea Bissau and continue their active involvement in the reconstruction process of the country.

The Authority paid tribute to the patriotism of the Armed Forces of Guinea Bissau and invited the international community to provide relevant assistance for security sector reforms and general reconstruction efforts in the country.

Sierra Leone

Heads of State and Government welcomed the considerable progress being made in Sierra Leone. They stressed the need to increase the international assistance extended for the implementation of the country's development programme in the post conflict period. In the light of the achievements made, the Authority strongly recommended that Sierra Leone should be removed from the list of the countries in conflict.

Togo

Heads of State and Government recognized that Togo is in the process of reconciliation with the framework of the inter-Togolese dialogue. They therefore encouraged all political parties in Togo to be involved in the dialogue. The Authority assured the Togolese political parties of the commitment of ECOWAS to continue to support the political process.

OPERATIONALISATION OF ECOWAS PEACE FUND

Heads of State and Government noted with much satisfaction the effective operationalisation of the ECOWAS Peace Fund. They congratulated the Member States which had made their contribution to the Fund and appealed to those which had not yet done so to meet this important Community obligation without further delay. They directed that an annual ECOWAS contribution of UA 2 million to the Fund should be made. They also expressed gratitude to the development partners who supported the creation of the Fund and have made financial contributions. The Authority recalled the three windows of the Peace Fund (conflict prevention and capacity-building; conflict management and peace-keeping, and post-conflict reconstruction). In their appeal to the international community for further support, Heads of State and Government indicated that the three Windows were designed to accommodate the different conditions governing the financial interventions of the principal West African development partners.

CONTROL OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME

The Authority reviewed the Community mechanisms for the fight against trans-border criminality, as part

of the objective of enhancing regional peace and stability. In acknowledgment of the importance of the ECOWAS initiative to curb human trafficking, Heads of State and Government agreed to extend for a further period of two years, the initial plan of action that had been in operation. They called on all Member States to take necessary measures to facilitate its implementation and contribute to the elimination of the dreadful scourge of human trafficking and slavery.

ECOWAS SUPPORT OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The Authority expressed regret at the slow pace of the reform of the UN, and in particular at the reluctance of certain countries to the expansion of the Security Council. Heads of State and Government stated that the proposed reform could give Africa increased representation and enable it to better defend the interests of the Continent. They, therefore, directed the ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs to redouble their efforts to accomplish the reform of the Security Council at the resumed session of the General Assembly in early 2006.

SPECIAL APPEAL ON THE COMMUNITY LEVY

Heads of State and Government noted the continued failure to fully implement the Community Levy by a majority of Member States. They strongly appealed to Member States to take all necessary measures to implement it fully to provide resources to ECOWAS.

The Authority stressed the need to devote more of the resources of the Community to the development of regional projects and encouraged the Executive Secretary to continue the reform of the budgeting process in that direction.

FREQUENCY OF ECOWAS SUMMITS

Heads of State and Government recalled their decision to hold ordinary sessions of the ECOWAS Authority twice a year. They took due note of the increasing pace of regional integration and the many issues that need to be brought before the Authority for consideration and decision. They, therefore, directed the Executive Secretary to organize the work of the Community to ensure the convening of the Authority twice a year.

SWEARING-IN OF SECOND ECOWAS PARLIAMENT

The Authority took note of the expiration of the first ECOWAS Parliament on 15 November 2005. In view of the decision to review the mission, functions and structure of the ECOWAS Parliament in the light of the experience over the last five years, the Authority decided that the restructuring of the Parliament should be completed before the Second Parliament is sworn-in.

APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Authority appointed Deloitte and Touche of Cote d'Ivoire as the External Auditors of the Community Institutions for a period of two years with effect from January 2006, renewable for two additional terms of a two-year duration each.

RENEWAL OF APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES

The Authority renewed for a term of five years the appointment of the following judges of the Community Court of Justice:

- **Justice Hansine N. Donli - President**
- **Justice Soumana D. Sidibe - Vice President**
- **Justice Awa Daboya Nana - Member**
- **Justice Anthony A. Benin - Member**

RENEWAL OF APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Authority renewed the appointment of the Executive Secretary, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas for a further four-year term with effect from 1st February, 2006.

ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRMAN OF AUTHORITY

Heads of State and Government re-elected His Excellency Mamadou Tandja President of the Republic of Niger as the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government for another term of one year.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT SUMMIT

The next ordinary session of the Authority shall be held in Niamey at a venue and date to be decided through consultation.

VOTE OF THANKS

The Heads of State and Government expressed their deep gratitude to His Excellency Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger and Chairman of the Community, for the leadership he has exercised in the promotion of regional peace and security and the strengthening of the ECOWAS integration and development process.

Their Excellencies expressed particular appreciation for the excellent hospitality extended to them during their stay in Niamey. The Heads of State lauded the contribution of President Tandja toward regional integration and the entrenchment of democracy.

The Authority expressed its gratitude and appreciation to all the Heads of State and Government involved in the peace initiative towards finding an acceptable and durable solution to the conflicts in the region.

THE AUTHORITY