

COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA
AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES



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

ECW/CM/LXXI

Original: English

**SEVENTY-FIRST ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

Abidjan, 16th – 17th December, 2013

FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS Commission
Abidjan, December, 2013

INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventy-First Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers was held from 16th to 17th December, 2013 in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. The meeting, which was attended by Ministers in-charge of ECOWAS Affairs and Finance, was chaired by H.E. Charles Koffi Diby, Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and Chairman of Council.

2. The following Member States were represented:

- Republic of BENIN
- BURKINA FASO
- Republic of CABO VERDE
- Republic of COTE D'IVOIRE
- Republic of The GAMBIA
- Republic of GHANA
- Republic of GUINEA
- Republic of GUINEA BISSAU
- Republic LIBERIA
- Republic of MALI
- Republic of NIGER
- Federal Republic of NIGERIA
- Republic of SENEGAL
- Republic of SIERRA LEONE
- TOGOLESE Republic

3. The following institutions and specialized agencies of ECOWAS were also represented:

- ECOWAS Commission;
- ECOWAS Parliament;
- Community Court of Justice;
- West African Health Organisation (WAHO);
- Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA);
- ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE);
- ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Agency (ERERA);
- Gender Development Centre.

4. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

5. In his opening address, the Chairman of Council focused on three issues, namely: the significant progress made by the sub-region, the challenges and the proposed items for discussion during Council's deliberations.

6. Regarding the progress made, he was pleased with the normalization of the situation in Mali, the region's support to Guinea Bissau in her efforts to exit the crisis, the adoption of the ECOWAS CET, the expansion of the Commission from nine (9) to fifteen (15) members and allocation of statutory positions based on the new structure of the Commission.

7. He stressed that the achievements in the area of peace and security was the evidence of the real determination of the region's leaders to build a realm of cooperation and an environment of lasting peace and development in the best interest of the people who legitimately aspire to well-being.

8. On the challenges, he stated that the region is confronted with and must address challenges relating to food security, governance, climate change, industrialization, youth employment and gender issues.

9. Concerning proposed items for discussion, he emphasized the need to do everything to ensure an inclusive regional integration taking due account of the legitimate expectations of the people and achieving the Community macroeconomic programmes. In that regard, he stated that this could be achieved by strictly adhering to the trade liberalization scheme through strict compliance with the rules of origin and the pursuit of efforts to remove non-tariff barriers with a view to achieving the required standardization of customs duties and the introduction of a single community levy in the region's customs sector. He added that this should also be reflected through the realization of monetary convergence, which requires the establishment of the second ECOWAS monetary zone. On the issue of development-based economic partnership, he shared with Council the idea of encouraging the European partners including France to support the region in the conclusion of the economic partnership agreements with more flexible and favourable timetable and content for our region, taking due account of environmental issues in ensuring our development.

10. He concluded his address by calling on the Guinea Bissau political class and authorities to rise above their parochial interests to ensure the organization of the elections postponed to March 2014, as funding for these elections are now available.

11. The President of the Commission started his address by requesting Council to observe a minute's silence in memory of the two Senegalese soldiers killed during the terrorist attack that occurred in Kidal, Mali on 14 December 2013.

12. He subsequently thanked the Government and people of Cote d'Ivoire for the brotherly hospitality as well as the facilities provided for the smooth conduct of the meeting. He emphasized the importance of this end-of-year session devoted to budgetary and institutional matters, as well as to the review of key Community programmes. He thanked the Ministers for their presence, which demonstrates the attachment and commitment of their respective countries to the deepening of the region's integration process.

13. Providing an update on the 2013 achievements, the President of the Commission expressed satisfaction at the results achieved in political and security stabilization in the region. In the case of Mali, he acknowledged the completion of the transitional process with the holding of the two rounds of the legislative elections following the exemplary presidential elections. As regards Guinea Bissau, he commended the generosity which the Member States have expressed towards Guinea Bissau with the financial support provided for the forthcoming election. He commended ECOMIB for its role in the stabilization of the country's security situation and, regarding Togo and Guinea, underscored the inauguration of new parliaments in those two countries.

14. With regard to economic and monetary integration, the President of the Commission highlighted the significant results achieved in the consolidation of the common market with the adoption of the ECOWAS CET. He hoped the implementation of the single currency would be expedited with the appointment of the Presidents of Ghana and Niger to supervise the implementation of the monetary cooperation programme. Lastly, the President underscored the region's new market access offer to the EU as part of the EPA negotiations. On these negotiations, he promised to do all he could to ensure strict compliance with the instructions issued by the Heads of State and Government for the conclusion of a regional, equitable and development-based EPA.

15. On institutional reforms, the President reaffirmed the Community Institutions' determination to improve the day-to-day operation of the Community and effectively strive towards the implementation of Community programmes. He consequently drew Council members' attention to the reports that will be presented on the ongoing major reforms, and underscored the efforts undertaken by the ECOWAS Parliament to enhance its powers for improved consolidation of the democratic gains in our Community.

16. In the light of these more than encouraging results, the President expressed sincere thanks and profound gratitude to the Current Chairman and his peers for the vision, expressed with such determination, of our regional integration process, as well as their support to the Community Institutions and the wisdom in their counsel for the attainment of ECOWAS objectives. The President also expressed gratitude to all the partners for their assistance and sustained support for the region's integration efforts.

17. The full texts of the speeches are attached to this report.

II. ELECTION OF BUREAU

18. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairman - Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
- Rapporteurs - Burkina Faso
- Republic of The Gambia

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

19. The following agenda was adopted:

I **Opening Ceremony**

- Opening Statement by H.E. Charles Koffi Diby, Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- Statement by H.E. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, President of the ECOWAS Commission

II. Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme

III Election of Bureau

ITEMS FOR DECISION

IV Presentation and Consideration of the 2013 Annual Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission;

V Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 70th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers;

VI Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2013 Interim Report;

VII Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 28th Audit Committee;

VIII Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 14th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;

IX Report of the 55th Technical Committee on Trade, Custom and Free Movement on the Biometric Identity Card and Residence Permit;

X Report of the 53rd ECOWAS Trade, Customs and Free Movement Technical Committee on Fiscal Transition Programme;

XI Consideration of the Memorandum on the Establishment of ECOWAS Permanent Representations in Member States;

XII Consideration of the Memorandum on the Establishment of an ECOWAS Representation in New York;

XIII Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 44th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

- XIV Consideration of the Report of the ECOWAS Ministers of Energy;
- XV Consideration of the Report of the Ministers of Justice;
- XVI Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of Ministers of Security;
- XVII Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of Ministers of Statistics;
- XVIII Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in Charge of Quality;
- XIX Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of the Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of the ECOWAS Commission;
- XX Consideration of the Memorandum on the Candidature of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republic of Niger and the Republic of Mali to International Positions;
- XXI Consideration of the Report of Ministers of Finance on the Establishment of an ECOWAS Investment Guarantee and Reinsurance Agency

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- XXII Memorandum on the Extension of the Commission to 15 Members
- XXIII Memorandum on the ongoing Institutional Reform
- XXIV Memorandum on the Recruitment into the Fifty-Two (52) Critical Positions the Commission
- XXV Implementation of Protocols relating to Free Movement of Persons and Goods: Communication by the Federal Republic of Nigeria

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- XXVI Adoption of Report

CLOSING CEREMONY

- XXVII Vote of Thanks
- XXVIII Closing Speech

IV. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

Items for Decision

Item 4: Presentation and Consideration of the 2013 Annual Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission

20. The 2013 Annual Report, under the theme "*ECOWAS' Adaptation to Climate, Security and Development Changes*", was presented by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Kadré Désiré OUEDRAOGO. The report assesses the recent

economic developments in the region within the global economic environment. It also examines, among others, the status of implementation of the Community Work Programme based on four priority areas, namely (i) consolidation of peace, security, democracy and human rights; (ii) acceleration of regional integration in all areas of economic and social life; (iii) promotion of economic prosperity by establishing a viable regional environment that enhances investment and entrepreneurship; and (iv) building of relationships and mutually beneficial partnerships with other parts of Africa and the world to address the challenge of globalization.

21. The presentation reveals that ECOWAS remains the best Regional Economic Community in Africa with the highest economic growth of 6.3% in 2013 and 7.1% in 2014 against 6.6% in 2012. The impressive regional growth rate is due to the growth vigour experienced in the national economies in 2013 especially from seven member States with growth rates above regional average growth rate of 6.3%. The seven Member States are: The Gambia (6.4%), Burkina Faso (6.8%), Nigeria (6.9%), Ghana (8.0%), Liberia (8.1%), Côte d'Ivoire (9.0%) and Sierra Leone (14.6%).

22. In addition, based on projections, the region will record a rise in GDP growth rate from 6.3% in 2013 to 7.1% in 2014. Eleven out of the fifteen Member States are expected to record growth rates of at least 5% (Benin, 6.5%; Burkina Faso, 7.0%; Côte d'Ivoire, 9.1%; The Gambia, 8.5%; Ghana, 8.0%; Liberia, 8.1%; Mali, 6.6%; Niger, 8.2%; Nigeria, 7.4%; Sierra Leone, 14.0%; Togo, 6.0%). The factors responsible for the good economic performance in most Member States include high foreign demand for minerals and hydrocarbon, good performance of the primary (agriculture) and services sectors, and strong macroeconomic policy reforms undertaken by the countries.

23. Concerning the implementation of the Community Work Programme in 2013, the President noted the significant achievements recorded by all the Community Institutions and Agencies in spite of the challenges faced in some parts of the region. On economic and monetary integration, he highlighted the progress made in ensuring harmonization of economic and financial policies of ECOWAS Member States, establishment of a regional payments and settlement system, integration of the financial markets, and promotion of a competitive business environment within the framework of the ECOWAS Multilateral Surveillance Mechanism, ECOWAS Investment Policy and the implementation of the Roadmap for the ECOWAS single currency programme leading to the transformation of the Community into a credible and viable economic and monetary union. To provide oversight for the ECOWAS single currency programme, the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held on 25th October, 2013 in Dakar appointed their Excellencies Presidents John Dramani Mahama and Mahamadou Issoufou of Ghana and Niger respectively.

24. On the issues of intra-regional trade and the establishment of a Customs Union, the President underscored the importance of promoting integration through trade and provided an update that the 25th October, 2013 Extraordinary Summit adopted the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) and additional protection measures to allow Member States

to adjust gradually to its application. The application of the CET will become effective as from 1st January, 2015.

25. Regarding the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations, the Commission President re-echoed the commitment of Heads of State to finding a fair and development-oriented EPA for the West Africa region (ECOWAS + Mauritania). To facilitate high-level dialogue, the Extraordinary Summit appointed H.E. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, to oversee the negotiations.

26. With respect to the development of natural resources in the region, he stated that the Commission had continued its efforts to promote food security and sovereignty, environmental protection and sustainable development in the region. He also provided information on the status of human development issues which include humanitarian and social affairs, gender, youth, sports, employment, education and drug control issues as well as efforts made to eliminate malaria in West Africa through the establishment of biolarvicide plants in three Member States, namely, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria.

27. The President gave a comprehensive report on the activities relating to the development and implementation of infrastructural programmes in the region. On energy, he stated the support given to member States that are in the process of adhering to the United Nation's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative and the approval of the sum of \$108 million in support to The Gambia (\$31.9 million), Mali (\$54.3 million) and Sierra Leone (\$21.8 million) to deal with urgent problems of electric power supply. In addition, he discussed ECOWAS' efforts at initiating cross-border electrification projects between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, Ghana and southern Togo, and Benin and northern Togo as well as the gradual integration of national energy systems in the Member States. As regards telecommunications, he presented that in 2013 eleven coastal member States were connected by submarine cable with at least one (1) new landing station and the three landlocked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) now have at least two access pathways to submarine cables.

28. The President also gave an update on the recruitment into the 52 critical positions in the Commission and institutional reforms implemented during the course of the year.

29. On the issue of promotion of good governance, peace and security, the President noted the efforts of the Community leadership in finding lasting solutions to the security and political crises in Mali and Guinea Bissau. With respect to Mali, the Commission continued its multi-faceted support for the stabilization of the country and the conclusion of the transition process. The presidential elections were held in July and August 2013 and the second round of parliamentary elections took place on 15 December 2013. As regards Guinea Bissau, ECOWAS has continued to play its mediation role in resolving the country's political logjam. ECOWAS continues to engage international partners to support the transition process and resolve the political and security crises in the country. In addition, an early warning programme on the security situation in the region was pursued and this included a consultative Round Table with the Civil Society in March 2013 to address security threats in Nigeria.

30. Lastly, the President highlighted the areas in which concerted efforts would be deployed to deepen the regional integration and development processes. The areas include promotion of economic diversification policies with a view to ensuring macroeconomic development and convergence, consolidation of peace and security, acceleration of the conclusion of the EPA negotiations, and infrastructure development including completion of the Community Investment Code and Regional Investment Policy. Other areas are continuous implementation of the ECOWAP, acceleration of the institutional reforms of all Community Institutions and Agencies, and improvement in the rate of collection of the Community Levy and management of financial resources.

31. Council lauded the quality of the Annual Report and commended the Commission for the actions taken.

32. At the end of the presentation, Council sought clarifications on some of the issues raised and also recommended the establishment of an ECOWAS Radio and Television Broadcasting Service. Council adopted the Report after clarifications were provided.

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 70th Ordinary Session of Council

33. The Commission presented an implementation status report on the tasks assigned to the ECOWAS Community Institutions by the Council of Ministers at its 70th Ordinary Session held in Abidjan from 20th to 21st June, 2013. The report covered the following eight key areas:

- ECOWAS Community Institutions Pension Scheme;
- ECOWAS Parliament and its Enhancement of Powers;
- Financial Controller's Assessment Report on Status of Implementation of its recommendations;
- 2012 Final Accounts and issues related to previous years;
- Expansion of the Commission from nine (9) to fifteen (15);
- ECOWAS-UEMOA negotiations with the EU on the basis of new market access and tariff dismantling timeframe;
- Recruitment Exercise into fifty-two (52) critical positions;
- Institutional Reform Exercise

34. After presentation, Council recommended that a column for deadlines be incorporated in the report on tasks assigned to enable it measure the level of accomplishment of each task. Thereafter, Council adopted the report after clarifications on issues raised were provided.

Item 6: Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2012 Interim Report

35. The Financial Controller's 2013 Interim Report covers the budgetary, financial and staffing situation of the Community institutions for the period 1st January to 30th June,

2013. The interim report recalled that the Council of Ministers at its Sixty-ninth Ordinary Session approved a total budget of UA 495,889,567 for Community Institutions for the year 2013, a momentous increase over the preceding year of which UA 167,319,510. The approved budget allocated UA 192,223,052 to Community Institutions, an increase of 15% over that of 2012. It also recalled that Council allocated UA 7,877,588 at the Community level for statutory obligations, UA 25,402,347 for interventions in Member States and UA 270,386,581 for Peace and Security. It mentioned that the budget was to be funded from Community Levy of UA 143,383,192, reserves of UA 110,892,644, Community Levy arrears of UA 210,424,285, contribution arrears of UA 4,177,690, donor grants of UA 26,862,370 and miscellaneous income of UA 143,386. In all, about 95% of the funding budget was expected to be funded from Community resources and 5% from donor funds.

36. It was reported that for the period under review, total income recorded was UA 231,714,642 or 47% of the budgeted income for the year. Of the total income recorded as received for the period, Community Levy accounted for UA 69,432,787 and reserves of UA 159,166,989, constituting 99% of total receipts. Out of the total levy received and reserves, UA 85,478,237 was disbursed to Community Institutions to finance their programmes and activities. A total of UA 587,516 was received from Ghana and Niger for contribution arrears. In effect, Niger has completely settled its contribution arrears. Donor grants received amounted to, UA 2,446,512 or 9% of the grants budgeted and miscellaneous income recorded stood at, UA 80,839.

37. The Acting Financial Controller reported that the Commission had taken steps to address issues relating to returns on assessment, collection and deposit of levy. The report noted that it is expected that the affected Member States would respond appropriately to the overtures of the Commission so as to resolve all identified problems.

38. On the contribution arrears, the Acting Financial Controller reported that with two and a half years left to the new deadline set for the settlement of all arrears by 31st December, 2015, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire Guinea and Guinea Bissau are yet to take firm action to settle the outstanding indebtedness to Community Institutions. He invited affected Member States to consider revising the rate of the Community Levy upward in order to raise the necessary funds to settle their indebtedness to the Community, as already done by some Members.

39. On the expenditure side, the report recorded UA 77,911,050 as committed during the period representing 16% of the total expenditure budget for the year. Overall programme expenditure recorded was UA 48,749,482 or 63% of the total expenses committed, administrative expenditure was UA 24,137,336 representing 31% of the total expenses committed, whilst amount spent on governing bodies was UA 4,146,081 and others stood at UA 878,152. The overall rates of budget and programme implementation were distorted by the performance of peace security budget head which disbursed only 7% of the over UA 270million allocated.

40. The report also noted extra-budgetary payments made in respect of the volatile situation in Guinea-Bissau and Mali as well as the humanitarian assistance to some Member States totalling UA 5,299,915.

41. As at 30th June, 2013, staff expenditure of UA 25,735,856 was reportedly committed, representing 43% of the staff expenditure budget for the year and accounting for 33% of the total expenditure for the period. Concerning the ECOWAS Pension Scheme for the staff of ECOWAS Institutions, the report noted that the Board of Trustees has opened a bank account into which Institutions have transferred their contributions and is set to conclude the recruitment of a Pension Consultant to assist the Board in setting up and operating the scheme.

42. On the financial situation, the Acting Financial Controller reported that a total of UA 167.5 million was held in various bank accounts by the Community institutions at the end of the period. Of the total amount held, UA 134.7 million was Community funds excluding funds lodged at the Central Bank of Nigeria as the bank statements for the said accounts could not be obtained at the time of this report.

43. On the staffing situation, it was reported that during the period under review, the total staff strength in ECOWAS Institutions decreased by one (1) staff, totalling One Thousand and Eight (1008). ECOWAS Commission had the highest number of staff of Six Hundred and Sixty-Two representing 66% of total staff. The total female staff is two hundred and eighty-five (285) representing 28% of total staff strength.

44. At the end of the report, three (3) recommendations were made for the consideration of the Council of Ministers, as follows:

- I. Concerning the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol by Member States, the reports of monitoring visits undertaken by the Sub-committee of the Community Levy Management Committee during the period to some member states revealed a number of issues that need to be addressed by the member states. The follow up visits by top management, with the support of Council, recommended to be conducted to discuss major outcomes of the technical missions with member states to get their commitment in improving compliance should be undertaken.
- II. On the contribution arrears, the following four (4) countries, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea Bissau are yet to take firm action to settle the outstanding indebtedness to the community institutions. The affected member states are invited to consider revising the rate of the community levy upward in order to raise the required funds to settle their indebtedness to the community as already done successfully by Togo, Liberia and recently Niger.
- III. On assumption of office in February 2012, the amount of UA 64,120 was paid to each of the statutory appointees being the total vehicle allowance due for their four (4) years tenure to enable them purchase their official vehicles. We observed that Eighteen (18) months later since payment was made, some Commissioners

continued to use fulltime the assigned pool vehicles. Our advice on the need to return the vehicles to the pool has not received favourable responses. We therefore call upon the Council to intervene on this issue.

45. As requested by the seventieth Session of the Council of Ministers, the Financial Controller also presented the status of implementation of adopted recommendations. This was adopted with the request that outstanding recommendations be executed to the letter.

46. After deliberations, Council referred the recommendation on the vehicles for the Vice President and Commissioners to the President of the Commission to address internally since this is an administrative matter.

47. Council then adopted the report thereafter.

Item 7: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 28th Meeting of the Audit Committee

48. The synopsis report of the 28th meeting of the Audit Committee were presented by its Chairman, Mr. Kalilou Traoré, and covered the following issues:

- Consideration of external auditors report on 2008 to 2011 financial statement audits
- Cross-cutting observations in the External Audit Reports
- Renewal and recruitment of External Auditors
- Special external audit report on 2007 – 30 June 2009 Expenditure
- Review of Tender Code and procurement practices
- IT governance and computerization in ECOWAS Institutions
- Capacity building of staff of the office of the Chief Internal Auditor
- Transfer of the assets of the former OCCGE and WAHC to WAHO
- Consideration of the travels study report
- Discussion on the establishment of the Community Levy Unit and modalities for management of 4.5% annual allocation to national units
- Discussion on recruitment process and job evaluation
- Consideration of implementation of tasks assigned to ECOWAS Organs (TAMOSYS)
- IPSAS & SAP implementation programme
- ECOWAS Code of Conduct.
- Proposals for establishment and implementation of responsible reporting of wrong doing (whistle blower charter)
- Update on progress on consultancy services for Institutional reforms
- Review of Rule of procedures of the Audit Committee

49. The Audit Committee made the following specific recommendations:

- Review of the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee;

- Adoption of 2011 Financial Statements of the Commission, WAHO and Community Levy and Donors Grant;
- Consideration of 2012 external auditors report on financial statement audits;
- Renewal of External Auditor's contract (KPMG);
- Audit of 2013 Financial Statements;
- End of tenure of current Audit Committee members and appointment of new ones, namely Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Togo.

50. After the presentation of the report, Council congratulated the Audit Committee for the quality of the report presented and adopted all recommendations contained therein.

Item 8: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 12th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

51. The final report of the 13th meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by Mr. Minourou Silla on behalf of the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Félix TANON. The report dealt mainly with the following issues:

- Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions
- 2013 Interim Report of the Financial Controller
- Implementation Status of the Community Levy Protocol
- Presentation of Budget Performance for January to September, 2013 and Brief on the 2014 Consolidated Budget
- Memorandum on the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament;
- Memorandum on the EBID Interest Rate Subsidy Fund (IRSF);
- Memorandum on the Draft Operational Manual for ECOWAS National Units;
- Presentation of the Status of the ECOWAS – Spain Fund on Migration and Development;
- Memorandum on the Provision of Currency and Contraband Scanners for GIABA Member States;
- Memorandum on "Fighting Terrorist and Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons Financing in West Africa Project";
- Memorandum on the Final Communiqué of the Meeting of the Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture;
- Memorandum on the Agreement between ECOWAS Commission and Swedish Government on the Reduction of vulnerability and adaptation to Climate Change in West Africa;

- o Presentation of the Memorandum of the Meeting ECOWAS Energy Ministers.
- o Memorandum on the Establishment of the Offices of Permanent and Special Representations in Member States
- o The 2013 Budgets of ECOWAS all Institutions

52. Following their deliberations, the AFC recommended for Council's approval, the Draft 2014 Community budget with estimated income of UA 410,138,463 and projected expenditure of UA 407,696,694, and resultant surplus of UA 2,441,769.

53. After extensive deliberations, Council directed the AFC to closely scrutinize all issues particularly budget proposals brought before them by the various institutions of the Community before recommending them to Council. Thereafter Council adopted the report of the AFC.

Item 9: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 55th Technical Committee of Trade, Custom and Free Movement on the biometric Identity card and Residence Permit;

54. The report of the 55th Meeting of the Technical Committee on Trade, Customs and Free Movement, held from 7th to 10th October, 2013 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in order to finalise the revision of Protocols on Free Movement of Persons, was presented by the Commission.

55. In this presentation, he highlighted the Committee's deliberations, on:

- The ICAO presentation on the diverse Technical Standards and Specifications on Travel Documents;
- The Memorandum on the Revision of the Protocols on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment;
- The Report of the Working Group on the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card;
- The Presentation of the Project Support for Integrated Border Management;

56. He stated that the Committee also examined and endorsed for adoption by the Council of Ministers, some proposed amendments to the various Protocols on Free Movement, namely:

- The removal of the Resident's Identity Card and the 90 day period;
- The removal of the period of stay for private vehicles (90) days and commercial vehicles (15 days);
- Elimination of the Health Card;
- Replacement of the ECOWAS Travel Certificate with the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card.

57. The Supplementary Acts relative to the proposed Amendments were also deliberated and agreed upon.

58. In conclusion, he said that the Technical Committee recommended for adoption the Report of its 55th meeting of the on Trade, Customs and Free Movement for adoption by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

59. After presentation, Council adopted the report and directed the Commission to continue the process of reviewing the relevant provisions of the Free Movement Protocols.

Item 10: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 53rd ECOWAS Trade, Customs and Free Movement Technical Committee on Fiscal Transition Programme;

60. The report which was presented by the Chairman of the Technical Committee, Mr Charles Désiré Gnakale, recalled that in accordance with Article 3 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the successful integration of the West African region depends on the establishment of a common market through trade liberalisation and the adoption of a Common External Tariff.

61. The report highlighted that the objectives of the tax and customs transition programme are:

- Consolidate the common market under construction within the ECOWAS space;
- Sustain economic growth in the various countries through the financing of development and social policies with domestic tax resources;
- Build the capacity of tax and customs administrations for the mobilisation of adequate resources;
- Modernize customs and tax administrations.

62. In his presentation, he indicated that intervention areas of the programme which revolve around the strategic axes of reforms retained under the transition programme are outlined as follows:

- Axis 1 : Capacity building for tax and customs administrations, general facilities, logistics, human resource, information systems, tax and customs procedures and operations;
- Axis 2: Control and expansion of the tax base;
- Axis 3: Streamlining of strategies for combating customs and tax fraud and corruption within the respective administrations.
- Axis 4: Improvement in customs and tax revenue collection;
- Axis 5: Promotion of tax compliance and investments

63. It was stated that the objective of this Report is to request the adoption of the Directive on tax and Customs transition programme by the Council of Ministers. He said that, taking into account that this programme aims to mitigate the fiscal impact of the Economic Partnership agreement, its adoption would give ECOWAS the opportunity to

better promote this programme in the interest of member states including Mauritania and encourage other stakeholders particularly the European Commission to sponsor it.

64. After presentation, Council adopted the Directive on ECOWAS tax transition programme.

Item 11: Consideration of the Memorandum of the Establishment of an ECOWAS Permanent Representations in Member States;

65. The Commission presented memorandum on the establishment of ECOWAS Permanent Representations in Member States. The memorandum recalled that the ECOWAS Commission (then Executive Secretariat) initiated a process aiming at ensuring its presence in Member States through the establishment of permanent representations in 2005, within the framework of strengthening regional capacities in the ownership and implementation of Community programmes.

66. The Commission stressed that the reasons for the establishment of ECOWAS permanent representations in Member States among others include:

- Bring the Community institutions closer to the people and better support the Member States' efforts in achieving ECOWAS objectives;
- Enhance ECOWAS' presence and visibility in the Member States through a representation;
- Promote relations between the host countries and ECOWAS Institutions and ensure monitoring;
- Serve as interface between the various national stakeholders for the promotion, ownership and implementation of the regional agenda;
- Enhance and facilitate coordination for the monitoring and implementation of regional programmes and;
- Support Member States' efforts in achieving ECOWAS objectives.

67. It was clearly mentioned that the establishment of permanent representations is not a duplication of the roles and functions of the Ministries of ECOWAS Affairs, which the Commission will continue to support through capacity building of the National Units. But on the contrary, this is part of a complementary approach to strengthen working relations, coordination of actions and mutual support between the Representations, the National Units and the Commission in achieving the integration process.

68. The Commission requested Council to:

- Formalize, through an act, the prior approval granted by the Council of Ministers in 2005 for the establishment of ECOWAS Permanent Representations in all the Member States;
- Approve the principle of the gradual establishment of the Permanent Representations based on the following timetable:

Member State	Year	Member State	Year
Burkina Faso	2014	The Gambia	2015
Liberia	2014	Ghana	2016
Togo	2014	Benin	2016
Niger	2015	Senegal	2016
Sierra Leone	2015	Cabo Verde	2017

- Approve an initial budgetary allocation of UA 150 000 to cover the costs of establishment and operation of each of the permanent representations for 2014;
- Approve a minimum staff structure and its staff to be recruited progressively.
- Approve the gradual transformation of the existing Special Representations (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Guinea Bissau) into a Permanent Representation.

69. Council after extensive deliberations adopted the memorandum in principle and requested the Commission to provide regular information on its implementation.

Item 12: Consideration of the Memorandum of the Establishment of an ECOWAS Representation in New York;

70. The Commission presented a memorandum on the Establishment of an ECOWAS representation in New York. The Commission recalled Article 83 (2) of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty which enshrines the need for the Community to cooperate with regional and international organizations. It also recalled **Article 52** of the 1999 Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution Peacekeeping and Security provides that ECOWAS shall cooperate notably with the UN and any other relevant international organization for the implementation of the mechanism and the pursuit of the goals of peace and security.

71. The Memorandum mentioned that the UNSC Resolution 1631 (2005) recommended improved communication between stakeholders through the establishment of liaison offices. Furthermore, owing to the nature of current security threats, their extra-polarity and impacts on international peace and security, the Security Council, on several occasions, called for the strengthening of the existing partnerships.

72. The memorandum further noted that ECOWAS effective presence in New York will contribute substantially to supporting the necessary consultations with a view to facilitating an enhanced understanding of regional positions on major political and security issues and, by the same token, an improved consideration of these regional positions in the United Nations decision-making process.

73. The Commission due to the foregoing, requested Council:-

- To approve the establishment of an ECOWAS Office in New-York as from 2014;

- To approve a minimum staff structure for the office to be recruited progressively;
- To approve an initial budgetary allocation of UA 250 000 to cover the cost of establishment and operation for the year 2014.

74. Council, after extensive deliberations adopted the memorandum in principle and requested the Commission to provide regular information on its implementation.

Item 13: Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 44th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

75. The President of the Commission presented the draft agenda of 44th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

76. Council adopted the agenda subject to amendments made.

77. The adopted agenda is attached to this report as an annex.

Item 14: Consideration of the Report of the ECOWAS Ministers of Energy;

78. A memorandum on the 10th Session of the ECOWAS Energy Ministers on 24th May, 2013, in Yamoussoukro, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, in accordance with the decisions of the 42nd Summit of the Authority of Heads of State was presented by the Minister of Energy of Cote d'Ivoire.

79. The meeting endorsed the Draft Directive on the organization of the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Market which had been adopted by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers. The meeting also adopted the Draft Regulation developed by the ECOWAS Energy Experts at their meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, from 24th to 26th July, 2013, proposing that Electricity Operators in Member States contribute about 30% of ERERA's budget during the transition period. In this regard, the ECOWAS Energy Ministers endorsed a lump sum contribution to ERERA by Member States.

80. In conclusion, the Meeting of ECOWAS Energy Ministers recommended that the ECOWAS Council of Ministers:

- Adopt the Draft Regulation;
- Direct the ECOWAS Commission and ERERA to mobilize from development partners, any additional funding required for the proper functioning of ERERA, and provide counterpart financial support.

81. After presentation, Council requested the Commission to present the memorandum to the Ministers of Energy before representing it to Council.

Item 15: Consideration of the Report of the Ministers of Justice;

82. The Vice President of the Commission presented the Report of the ECOWAS Ministers of Justice held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 12th to 13th September, 2013.

83. In his presentation, he indicated that the purpose of the Ministerial Meeting was to consider the recommendations that emanated from the meeting of the Technical Committee of Legal and Judicial experts which met from 9th to 11th September, 2013 to consider the Draft Supplementary Act on the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament.

84. In considering the Technical Committee's Report, the Ministerial Committee focused mainly on the following issues:

- Absolute Majority (Article 1 of the Draft Supplementary Act);
- Life of the Legislature (Article 5 of the Draft Supplementary Act);
- Remuneration of Parliamentarians (Article 53.3 of the Draft Supplementary Act);
- Financial Autonomy of the Parliament (Article 14 of the Draft Supplementary Act);
- Immunity (Article 18 of the Draft Supplementary Act);
- Office of the ECOWAS Parliamentary Ombudsman (Article 50 of the Draft Supplementary Act).

85. After deliberations, Council deferred the adoption of this memo and requested the Parliament to provide more details, especially, with regards to the financial implications including the responsibility for the cost as well as the sharing of responsibilities with the ECOWAS Court of Justice. Council further directed the Parliament to provide details with respect to the duties of the enhanced parliament and its relation with other ECOWAS institutions. It also requested the review of the mandatory referral and better definition of the modalities for co-decision with the Council of Ministers.

Item 16: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of Ministers of Security;

86. The Report of the Meeting of the Ministers of Security was presented by Honourable Konateh Tiefing, Minister in Charge of African Integration and Internal Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. In his presentation, he indicated that the Meeting focused on the Report and recommendations of the preparatory meeting of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Committee on Trade, Customs and free Movement held from 3-4 May, 2012, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

87. In this regard, the following recommendations were considered and endorsed by the Ministers in Charge of Security:

- Introduction of National Biometric Identity cards and Passports;
- Establishment of Biometric Profiling of International Passengers;
- issuance of ECOWAS Biometric Passports;
- Installation of Immigration Booths Specifically for ECOWAS Citizens;
- Review of National Legislation on rights of Entry, Residence and Establishment for Foreigners;
- Establishment of a National Monitoring Committee on Free Movement;

- Establishment of Monitoring Units/Information Centres at ECOWAS Borders;
- Adoption of Minimum Action Plan for 2013 on Free Movement;
- Sensitisation of Member States and Community Citizens on adopted Recommendations and texts relating to Free Movement of Persons and Goods;
- Entrenchment of the Protocol on Free Movement in the training Curriculum of Various Training Institutions of Learning for Operatives of Member States.

88. Following deliberations, the Meeting endorsed the recommendations contained in the report for adoption by the Council of Ministers.

89. Council adopted the report thereafter.

Item 17: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of Ministers of Statistics

90. The Minister of Planning and Development of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, H.E. Mr Albert Toikeusse MABRI, presented the report of the meeting of the Ministers in Charge of Statistics held on the 13th September, 2013 in Abidjan.

91. He informed that policy documents were prepared in collaboration with UEMOA, WAMA, WAMI, AFRISTAT, United Nations Statistics Division and ECOWAS Member National Statistics Offices aimed at addressing the need for the development of harmonised, reliable and quality statistics in the Region. He indicated that the implementation of the policy documents will facilitate the development of the statistical systems of the Member States and the region for the production of harmonized, reliable and quality statistical information for decision making, monitoring Regional Integration programmes such as Macroeconomic Convergence, MDGs, ECOWAP and the implementation of development policies;

92. After presentation, the Council of Ministers adopted the report of the Sectoral Ministers. Council in adopting the report directed the ECOWAS Commission and the Member States to jointly implement the policy documents adopted by Council.

Item 18: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in Charge of Quality;

93. On behalf of the Honourable Minister for Industry and Mines of Côte d'Ivoire, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Industry presented the Report of the ECOWAS Ministers responsible for quality held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on 27th November, 2013, to consider and validate the draft Regulations relating to the establishment of the Regional Quality Infrastructure Scheme, ECOWAS Quality Award and the draft regulations (specification) approving the standards for rice seeds (specification), maize seeds and palm oil.

94. The Report reflected the deliberations and recommendations of the meeting on the following:

- The Report of National Experts on the ECOWAS Regional Quality and consideration of the related Draft regulation;
- The ECOWAS Quality Award and consideration of related draft Regulations;
- The Draft Regulations on Standards for Rice Seeds (Specification), Maize Seeds and Palm Oil;
- Consideration of the Progress in the African Union Programme on the Environmental Label;
- The Report of Experts of the Technical Management Committee (TMC).

95. Following deliberations, the Meeting made the following recommendations for consideration and adoption by the Council of Ministers:

- The Private Sector should be taken into account in the quality Infrastructure Scheme and related Regulations;
- Member States should have two representatives in the Jury, one from the Private Sector and one from the Public Sector;
- In addition to the ISO 9001 reference, forecast other criteria related to the socioeconomic realities of the region;
- Create a regional event during which the awards will be made;
- Define the different levels of the award;
- Develop a temporary arrangement for the first edition;
- Continue the standards harmonization for important products in the region such as refined palm oil, groundnut oil, cotton seed oil etc.

96. In conclusion, the Ministers recommended the adoption of their Meeting Report by the Council of Ministers.

97. After deliberations, Council adopted the six (6) submitted Regulations and requested the Commission to provide details on the implementation and progress of the quality programme. Council also adopted the draft African Union Resolution on Eco-labelling initiative.

Item 19: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of the Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of the ECOWAS Commission;

98. The Commission presented the Report of the Meeting of the Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources. The Report indicated that the Specialized Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of the ECOWAS Commission, comprising Ministers in charge of Environment, Forestry and Wildlife met in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, on 13th September, 2013, to consider and adopt the following two documents which form part of the strategies to implement the ECOWAS Environmental Policy:

- The Sub-regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in West Africa (SRAP/CCD);
- The Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Utilization of Forest Ecosystems in West Africa.

99. The two documents were adopted by the Specialised Ministerial Technical Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources.

100. After deliberations, the Council adopted the report.

Item 20: Consideration of the Memorandum on the Candidature of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republic of Niger, the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to International Positions:

101. The President of the Commission informed Council of the candidatures of the under mentioned citizens from Member States as follows:

- **Engr. Shola Taylor** from the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) whose election will be held from 20 October to 7 November 2014 at the Busan Conference in the Republic of Korea.
- **Mr. Abdoukarim SOUMAÏLA** from the Republic of Niger for re-election to the post of Secretary-General of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU).
- **Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama** from the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the post of Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) whose election will be held in 2014.
- **Dr. Fatoumata Nafu Traoré** from the Republic of Mali to the post of Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Bureau for Africa.
- **Professor Therese N'dri-Yoman** from the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to the post of Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Bureau for Africa

102. He mentioned that, these are important positions which afford our region the opportunity to be represented in international governance structures, which falls in line with a long-standing commitment enshrined in our Treaty to support such efforts in accordance with our spirit of solidarity and the need to harmonize our positions to protect the region's interests.

103. Council decided to support the candidatures presented by the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Niger Republic.

104. Council noted that there were two (2) candidatures for the post of Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) from the Republics of Cote D'Ivoire and Mali and decided to refer the matter to the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 21: Consideration of the Report of Ministers of Finance on the Establishment of an ECOWAS Investment Guarantee and Reinsurance Agency

105. Mr. Kalilou Traoré, Director of Cabinet at the Ministry of Integration, Côte d'Ivoire, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, presented the report.

106. He stated that surveys of multinational enterprises by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) have consistently found that political risk is investors' top concern over the medium term due to issues like terrorist threats, economic crises, and developing countries' desire to control their natural resources and civil societies. Accordingly, the demand for political risk insurance (PRI), one of the main tools available to investors for mitigating political risk, jumped from \$10 billion in 1998 to more than \$43 billion in the first half of 2011.

107. He highlighted that following several meetings and based on the recommendation of the National Experts, a meeting of Ministers of Finance to consider the report and recommendations of the regional experts was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on Friday, 30 August 2013.

108. Following deliberations on the report of National Experts, the Finance Ministers recommended the following to Council of Ministers which were adopted:

- a. The establishment of an investment guarantee mechanism is well overdue and should be facilitated by Member States without delay.
- b. On the basis of a feasibility report presented by the ECOWAS Commission, the most practicable option for the development of the regional investment guarantee mechanism is the proposed partnership with ATI. ECOWAS Commission and Member States should set up partnerships with the ATI in order to establish a regional investment guarantee mechanism.
- c. The meeting of Finance Ministers approves the Experts' report on the implementation of the investment guarantee mechanism and will submit same for adoption at the next meeting of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.
- d. The Council of Ministers is urged to set up an Implementation Committee comprising representatives of Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, ECOWAS Commission, EBID, WAICA and ATI, with the aim of defining procedures for an ECOWAS-ATI partnership. This Committee is urged to commence initial steps to facilitate implementation of the selected option.
- e. The meeting of Finance Ministers strongly recommends approval of the Experts' report on the ECOWAS Investment Guarantee Mechanism to be implemented in

partnership with ATI, by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State, in order to facilitate its implementation.

109. The Council of Ministers in adopting the report and recommendations directed the ECOWAS Commission to lead in the urgent and speedy implementation of the recommendations.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 22: Memorandum on the Extension of the Commission to fifteen (15) Members:

110. The President of the Commission recalled the decision of the 43rd Authority of Heads of State and Government in July 2013 expanding the Commission from 9 to a 15 member Commission where statutory positions were allocated to Member States.

111. The President stated that letters were sent to Member States requesting them to advertise and submit a shortlist of three (3) candidates to the Commission by 30th September, 2013. He further mentioned that to date, Guinea has not submitted candidates for its Commissioner position, Benin has submitted only one candidate for Deputy-Director General of WAHO position as well as Guinea Bissau which has not submitted candidates for its Judge position.

112. The President indicated that the interviews for these positions have been slated for January, 2014 and the final report of the interviews will be presented at an Extra-Ordinary Session of Council.

113. In addition, the President of the Commission reminded Council that in the allocation of the statutory positions, that Member States with only one Statutory position would be given priority in the next round of allocations.

114. Council took note of the Memorandum.

Item 23: Memorandum on the Ongoing Institutional Reform Exercise:

115. The Commission presented a status report on the ongoing Institutional Reform Exercise as directed by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, at its 66th Ordinary Session held from 17th to 19th August, 2011, and 11th Extraordinary Session held in Abidjan on 18th May, 2012. It stated that after a thorough and transparent procurement process, Maxwell Stamp PLC (UK), an International Consulting Firm with core expertise in institutional reform, was selected to carry-out the Institutional Review Project as directed by Council. The Consultants commenced the assignment on 1st July, 2013.

116. The Report highlighted that the Consultants were on track and had already submitted to the Commission an Inception Report, a first Progress Report as well as a Final Draft Progress Report of Phase I. It was stated that an ECOWAS Spécial Joint Management Meeting was held on 11th December, 2013 to discuss Final Draft Progress

Report. It was agreed that comments from all ECOWAS Institutions should be collated and submitted to the Reform Consultants for incorporation into the final report. The Final Report of Phase 1 would then be presented at an Extra-Ordinary Session scheduled to hold in January, 2014 for approval.

117. After presentation, Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 24: Memorandum on the Recruitment to the Fifty-Two (52) Critical Positions in the Commission;

118. The Commission recalled that clear time lines were fixed for the conclusion of the entire recruitment process of the fifty-two (52) critical positions by 3rd November, 2013. This deadline was endorsed by the AFC and approved by the Council of Ministers at its 70th Ordinary Session, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 20th – 21st June, 2013.

119. The report indicated that, the Commission could not meet the deadline for the conclusion of the exercise due to delays on the part of the Recruitment Consultants. The latter informed the Commission, by letter dated 31st July, 2013, that they could not meet the deadline of 15th August, 2013 and requested for an extension of one month that is, up to 15th September, to conclude the shortlisting, which is the most essential part of the process, that would allow the Commission to commence the interviews in order to avoid compromising the quality of work.

120. The Commission reported that subsequent to the extension requested by the Consultants, the Commission concluded the interviews of shortlisted candidates on 10th December, 2013 and following the completion of the interviews of the shortlisted candidates, the Management Succession Committee would need to meet to approve the recommendations contained in the report of its Sub-committee which interviewed candidates for Director and P5 Managerial positions. It was also reported that, the President would also need to approve the report of the Advisory Committees for the Appointments and Promotions of Professional and Locally-Recruited Staff.

121. The Commission informed that, the details of the successful candidates would be submitted to the Background Check Expert for verification of information provided by candidates and requested that Council could in the meantime approve the report in principle, subject to the outcome of the background check. The Commission indicated that successful candidates are expected to assume duty on the conclusion of the background check.

122. It is Nigeria's belief that the issue of "Equitable Geographical Distribution" of posts which have been reoccurring should be permanently brought to rest. Equitable Geographical distribution of post must be premised on identifiable parameters – Demography, financial contribution and other appropriate yardsticks. This will give a very clear picture on appropriateness of member states' representation. To this effect, care

must be taken in the application of the policy – Equitable Geographical Distribution of posts in ECOWAS institutions so that some Community citizens are not inequitably displaced. The new philosophy of moving from an “ECOWAS of State” to an “ECOWAS of People” must take root in all decisions in our Community. It will definitely avail Council and the Commission’s President with scientific data upon which to base the “Equitable Geographical Distribution of Posts rather than an arbitrary application of this policy by merely looking at members. The ECOWAS Staff Regulation in particular Article 20, 63 (c), 64 and 65 should be strictly adhered to.

123. During the discussions, Council particularly emphasized the need to substantially correct the imbalance in the geographical distribution of the Commission’s staff between Member States. Council also underscored the need to ensure respect for the principle of fairness in the treatment of Member States and taking due account of the gender dimension.

124. Council requested the President of the Commission to take due account of the issues and recommendations raised.

Item 25: Implementation of Protocols relating to Free Movement of Persons and Goods: Communication by the Federal Republic of Nigeria

125. The Federal Republic of Nigeria presented a communication on the implementation of protocols relating to free movement of persons and goods. In his presentation, the Minister of State II for Foreign Affairs drew the attention of Council to the provisions of the protocols and urged Member States to endeavor to respect such provisions. He highlighted some of the challenges encountered by Community citizens in some Member States and indicated that wherever there is conflict between the ECOWAS protocols and national laws, the former should always take precedence.

126. Council took note of this communication.

Item 26: Any Other Business

127. No item was discussed under this heading.

Item 27: Adoption of the Report

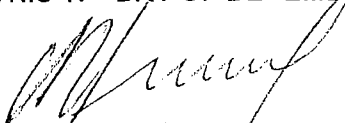
128. This report was adopted after amendments.

Item 26: Closing Ceremony

129. The Chairman of Council, H.E. Charles Koffi Diby, in his closing remarks, thanked Council members for their contributions during the deliberations and for the spirit of camaraderie, which prevailed during their session. Thereafter, he declared the Seventieth

Ordinary Session of Council closed, and wished all participants safe journey back to their respective destinations.

DONE AT ABIDJAN THIS 17th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2013




HIS EXCELLENCY CHARLES KOFFI DIBY
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

CHAIRMAN

FOR: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS



VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at the Seventy-First Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers held in Abidjan, from 16th – 17th December, 2013 express their profound gratitude to His Excellency Alassane Ouattara President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Chairman of the Authority, and to the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire for the warm African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Abidjan and for the facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the success of their meeting.

DONE AT ABIDJAN THIS 17TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 2013

THE SESSION