

**COMUNIDADE ECONOMICA DOS
ESTADOS DA AFRICA OCIDENTAL**

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES**



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

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**EIGHTY-SIXTH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

Accra, 16 - 17 June 2021

FINAL REPORT

**ECOWAS Commission
Accra, June 2021**

INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers was held on 16 and 17 June 2021 in Accra, Republic of Ghana. The Session, which was attended by Ministers in-charge of Regional Integration and Finance, was chaired by Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana and Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

2. The following Member States were represented:


- Republic of Benin;
- Burkina Faso;
- Republic of Cabo Verde;
- Republic of Côte d'Ivoire;
- Republic of The Gambia;
- Republic of Ghana;
- Republic of Guinea;
- Republic of Guinea Bissau;
- Republic of Liberia;
- Republic of Niger;
- Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- Republic of Senegal;
- Republic of Sierra Leone;
- Togolese Republic.

3. The Republic of Mali did not participate because of the suspension imposed on the Member State by the Authority of Heads of State and Government from participating in all ECOWAS activities until further notice.

4. The following Institutions and Specialised Agencies of ECOWAS were also represented:

- ECOWAS Commission;
- ECOWAS Parliament;
- ECOWAS Community Court of Justice;
- West African Health Organisation (WAHO);
- Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA);
- Office of the Auditor General (OAG).

5. The Audit Committee of Council also participated in the meeting.

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

I. OPENING CEREMONY

7. In his opening remarks, the President of ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Ghana for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to members of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, as well as for the excellent facilities put at their disposal to ensure a successful conduct of the deliberations. He also congratulated the Republic of Ghana on its election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and wished the country every success in this mandate.

8. The President of the Commission also congratulated the Republics of Niger and Benin on the conduct of successful presidential elections, as well as the Republics of Cote d'Ivoire and Cabo Verde on the smooth conduct of legislative elections.


9. He appreciated the strong participation of Council members which reflects their commitment to the Community's regional integration agenda. He also thanked them for their constant support to the ECOWAS Institutions in the discharge of their statutory functions.

10. The President of the Commission highlighted the salient points which would be addressed by Council, notably, the status of implementation of the Community Work Programme, report on the financial situation of the Community, the Auditor-General's Report, the 43rd Audit Committee report, the Administration and Finance Committee report, and reports on the various programmes of the community.

11. Finally, he expressed his wish for a successful Council Session.

12. In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of Council, Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, conveyed greetings from His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS to the Council and warmly welcomed members of Council.

13. Hon. Ayorkor Botchwey recalled the important subjects relating to peace, security and the strengthening of democracy within ECOWAS, during the 46th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council and highlighted the agenda items to be discussed. The Honourable Minister called on Member States to draw on the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic.

14. Thereafter, she solicited Council's cooperation in critically and selflessly scrutinising the documents before them while also carefully examining the recommendations presented to enable them make informed decisions for the development of the Community. 

15. On that note, she declared the 86th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers open and wished all members of Council fruitful and constructive deliberations.

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

II. ELECTION OF BUREAU

17. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairman - Republic of Ghana;
- Rapporteurs - Republic of Cabo Verde;
- Republic of Niger;
- Federal Republic of Nigeria.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

18. The following agenda was adopted:

I. OPENING CEREMONY

- Welcome Statement by President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Mr Jean-Claude Kassi Brou**;
- Opening Remarks by Chairperson of Council, **Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey**, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana;
- Group Photograph;

II. CLOSE OF OPENING CEREMONY

- Housekeeping Information;

III. CLOSED DOOR SESSION

- Opening of Session by the Chairperson of Council;
- Election of Bureau;
- Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme;

ITEMS FOR DECISION


- i. Presentation and Consideration of the 2021 Interim Report of the President of ECOWAS;
- ii. Presentation and Consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community
- iii. Presentation and Consideration of the Auditor General's 2020 Annual Report;

- iv. Presentation and Consideration of Report of the 40th Meeting of the Audit Committee;
- v. Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 29th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;
- vi. Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 85th Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers;
- vii. Presentation and Consideration of Draft Agenda of the 59th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

- viii. Presentation of a Memorandum on the Ministerial Committee on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme
- ix. Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry and of the 12th ECOMOT Meeting;
- x. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Adoption of the Decision establishing and hosting the ECOWAS African Research and Innovation Forum (FARI);
- xi. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of Meeting of the Specialised Technical Ministerial Committee for Hydrology, Meteorology, Gender, and Disaster Risk Reduction on; ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative; Regional Flood Risk Management Strategy; Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction;
- xii. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the Adoption of Regional Harmonised Standards;
- xiii. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the adoption of Technical Regulations on Standards;
- xiv. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the ECOWAS Post-Covid-19 Industry Recovery Programme;
- xv. Presentation of a Memorandum on the Integrated Human Capital Strategy for West Africa;

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- xvi. Presentation of a Memorandum on Status Report on the Legal Review for the accession of Third Countries to the ECOWAS Treaty;
- xvii. Presentation of a Memorandum on the Status of Vision 2050;
- xviii. Presentation of a Memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' Applications for International and Regional Statutory Positions;
- xix. Presentation of a Memorandum on the outcome of the Jury's deliberations for the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI) held in Niamey, from 6 to 8 April 2021; 

- xx. Presentation of a Memorandum on the Fund for Regional Stabilisation and Sustainable Development in Fragile Regions in West Africa;
- xxi. Memorandum on the status of implementation of recommendations following the Forensic Audit of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies for the 2013-2017 period.

STRICT CLOSED DOOR SESSION

- xxii. Report of the Extraordinary Session of Council on Institutional reforms
- xxiii. Memorandum on the proposed Mechanism of Rotation of ECOWAS Member States' Candidatures to the Chairmanship of the African Union
- xxiv. Consideration of Appeals of Staff dismissed in connection with Forensic Audit;

STRICT CLOSED DOOR SESSION ENDS


- xxv. Any Other Business;
 - 1. Replacement of the deceased Commissioner from Guinea Bissau;
 - 2. Ghana/Benin ETLS issue;
- xxvi. Adoption of report of the meeting;
- xxvii. Vote of Thanks;
- xxviii. Closing Ceremony;

IV. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Item 1: Presentation and Consideration of the 2021 Interim Report of ECOWAS

19. In his presentation, the President of the Commission expressed concern about the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region with significant costs in human, socio-economic and health system terms. In this regard, he commended the efforts of Member States in the area of vaccination and thanked public and private partners who provided funding for the purchase of vaccines under the COVAX initiative.

20. He subsequently underscored the ongoing security threats in the Sahel region, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and northern Nigeria, which have exacerbated the humanitarian crises, with loss of lives and increased number of internally displaced persons and refugees. In this respect, he recalled the progress made in the implementation of the regional security plan through capacity building for stakeholders in intelligence coordination. While thanking Ghana for disbursing USD 5 million to support the programme, he appealed to other Member States to make their own contributions to this programme. Lastly, he stressed the urgent need to fully and rapidly operationalise the maritime centres in the region in order to combat acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. 

21. On peace and democracy in the region, the President welcomed the peaceful conduct of presidential elections in Niger and Benin as well as the successful legislative elections in Cabo Verde. He then noted that the Extraordinary Summit on Mali condemned the coup d'état that took place in that Member State, and commended the efforts of the ECOWAS Mediator and the mechanism put in place to monitor the political transition in Mali.

22. As regards the economy, Mr Brou stated that according to the IMF, global economic growth is projected to pick up to 6.0% in 2021 following a 3.3% recession in 2020, whereas in Africa, growth forecasts indicate an increase in real GDP of 5.4% in 2021 from a 2.9% recession in 2020. In particular, he reported that West Africa would post an economic growth of 3.4%, following a slight contraction of 0.8% in 2020, against a macroeconomic backdrop characterised by the (i) resurgence of inflationary pressures with average annual inflation of 12% in 2021 compared to 10% in 2020, (ii) narrowing of budgetary imbalances with reduction of the overall budget deficit from 7.4% in 2020 to 5.3% in 2021, albeit above the 3% convergence norm and (iii) rise in public debt. The public debt ratio is expected to rise from 31.5% of GDP in 2020 to 41.8% in 2021.

23. In order to support the recovery plans, the President of the Commission stressed the need for fresh financial resources to be made available to countries. In this regard, after welcoming the conclusions of the Paris Summit on Financing of African Economies and the Debt Service Suspension Initiative extended until 31 December 2021, he called for high-level advocacy for debt relief.


24. With respect to the Commission's programme, the President reviewed the status of implementation of the different programmes and projects, in particular:

- i. Advanced state of development of the ECOWAS Vision 2050, which is being developed on the basis of an inclusive and consultative process and is expected to be adopted in December 2021;
- ii. Tensions over food security in the region, strengthening of the West African Food Security Stockpile, issue of cross-border transhumance and pastoralism and validation of the 2020-2025 Regional Action Plan on Rice Offensive;
- iii. Progress in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with the launch of trade in goods in January 2021 and ongoing negotiations on tariff offers and rules of origin as well as the establishment of mechanisms to support the AfCFTA;
- iv. Border situation characterised by the reopening of Sierra Leone and Guinea borders, Nigeria's borders with Benin and Niger in contrast with the closure of Guinea's borders with Guinea-Bissau and Senegal;
- v. Progress in the implementation of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor project, with the completion of technical, economic and pre-project feasibility studies;
- vi. Adoption of a regional strategy under the ECOWAS Cyber Security Programme;
- vii. Progress in the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Access Project with the start of construction of power lines, upgrading and extension of

- distribution networks, resumption of priority interconnection projects, completion of the Gouina and Souapiti dams, operationalisation of the Information and Coordination Centre and synchronisation of interconnected networks;
- viii. Ongoing work under the West African Competitiveness and Quality Infrastructure Project, through the promotion of the ECOWAS certification mark for targeted value chains, adoption of ECOWAS Standards for selected appliances and materials and the ECOWAS Regional Pharmaceutical Plan;
 - ix. Award of two prizes under the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI) for (a) formulation of drugs to combat antibiotic resistant diseases and COVID-19 with African flora and (b) formulation of anti-malarial drugs for 3 ECOWAS countries. Similarly, the winners of the 2021 edition of the ECOWAS Excellence Award have been selected and the awards will be presented at the December 2021 Summit;
 - x. Ongoing efforts in (a) **disaster risk reduction** with the adoption of the regional flood risk management strategy and the ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative and (b) **drug prevention and control** with support for drug treatment centres, strengthening of drug data collection and dissemination mechanism as well as **medical and financial support** to women and girls with obstetric fistula; and
 - xi. **The region's disturbing situation with regard to the Human Development Index**, which is the lowest in the world, coupled with poor policy coordination and low funding levels. In this connection, **he welcomed the mobilisation** of EUR 61 million for the implementation of the **Regional Stabilisation and Development Project**, which is scheduled to be launched in the third quarter of 2021.

25. Regarding the ECOWAS Parliament, it was reported that the 2nd **Ordinary Session for 2020** was held from 13 to 19 January 2021 and the strategic plan for the fifth legislature was adopted at its 1st Ordinary Session for 2021, held from 27 May to 12 June 2021. In addition, a **seminar on the theme "Involvement of ECOWAS Members of Parliament in monitoring the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol"** was organised in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 23 to 25 March 2021.

26. Concerning the ECOWAS Court of Justice, the presentation indicated that the Court continued to **implement its activities with 20 new cases filed as at 31 May 2021. Of the 28 hearings by videoconference**, 11 judgments and 2 decisions were delivered. The Registry received and processed 13 legal documents, made 637 notifications with 397 court decisions yet to be translated.

27. **On GIABA, it was reported that the Mutual Evaluation Reports** for Sierra Leone and Benin were adopted in December 2020 and May 2021 respectively, and the Monitoring Reports for six countries (Guinea, Liberia, Ghana, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mali) have been prepared. 

28. With regard to WAHO, aside from monitoring the COVID-19 situation, the organisation has also monitored other diseases (Cholera, Lassa Fever, Measles, Meningitis, Yellow Fever, Dengue Fever) and set up epidemiological surveillance centres in 5 countries. In addition, sixty (60) specialists and trainers have been deployed in Member States with financial support from Nigeria as part of capacity building in beneficiary countries. Similarly, financial support was provided to 8 countries for the **harmonisation of training content in ten medical and health specialities**.


29. According to WAHO, the region has experienced two waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there are indications that we may yet experience a third wave, similar to what is happening in some countries across the world. As at 10 June 2021, we have reported 476,992 cumulative confirmed cases with a total of 6,325 citizens who have lost their lives due to the infection. This compares to 174,789,379 confirmed cases globally and 4,983,780 in Africa with 3,770,098 and 133,679 deaths respectively. The number of active cases in our region stood at 11,611, with four Member States experiencing an increase in infections over the past 3 weeks.

30. Preventing infection and reducing transmission through non-pharmaceutical measures and the “Test, Trace, and Treat” strategy have been and remain the region’s major tools in current response efforts. The COVAX initiative has provided to date over 7 million doses of vaccines to the region, the first batch of which arrived in March 2021, and to date over 50% of all vaccines received have been administered. The region has adopted a vaccines exchange mechanism to ensure no vaccines are wasted in any Member State.

31. Council was informed of six major challenges with relevant recommendations – non-adherence to consensus decisions, inadequate funding of vaccine costs by Member States, lack of staff at WAHO, vaccine hesitancy, vaccine passports and the need for infrastructure to enable of land borders. It was recommended that, given the imminent widespread introduction of vaccine passports for international travel and the potential impact on free movement, the region should explore the feasibility of establishing biometric vaccine passports.

32. In terms of challenges, there is non-adherence to consensus decisions, particularly a few Member States have still not capped the cost of PCR test for travel at \$50 for ECOWAS citizens, whilst some Member States require Covid tests on arrival despite valid pre-travel PCR tests; and others do not share epidemiological information with WAHO daily for the benefit of all other Member States.

33. After exhaustive discussions, Council adopted the 2021 ECOWAS Interim Report. The Council welcomed the holding of the Paris Summit on the financing of African economies in the post-Covid-19 context and encouraged Member States to join efforts to mobilize resources, including through debt relief and cancellation measures.

Item 2: Presentation and Consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community 

34. The Commission presented the report on the financial situation of the Community as at 31st May 2021. It stated that the Council of Ministers, during its 85th Ordinary Session held virtually from 20 – 21 January 2021, approved the budget of ECOWAS Institutions for the financial year 2021 in the amount of UA 398,044,626, balanced in revenue and expenditure.

35. With regard to the Income component of the approved budget, the Community Levy remains the main source of ECOWAS financing representing 71% of the budget. On the expenditure side, the largest share (80%) continues to be allocated to Community Institutions.

36. The Commission also informed Council that as at 31st May 2021, a total amount of UA 113,923,947 had been mobilized, representing an implementation rate of 28.6% of which:

- (i) UA 37,637,412 as Community Levy from all Member States (20.3%)

Table 1: Community Levy Proceeds as at 31st May 2021

MEMBER STATE	TOTAL LEVY DEPOSIT (UA)	ARREARS DEPOSIT (UA)	TOTAL (UA)
BENIN	141,531		141,531
BURKINA FASO	5,531,892		5,531,892
CABO VERDE	0		0
COTE D'IVOIRE	7,170,461		7,170,461
THE GAMBIA	331,042		331,042
GHANA	8,489,430		8,489,430
GUINEA	2,876,368		2,876,368
GUINEA BISSAU	452,216		452,216
LIBERIA	662,348		662,348
MALI	3,591,330		3,591,330
NIGER	102,059		102,059
NIGERIA*		42,546,230	42,546,230
SENEGAL	6,283,892	9,425,838	15,709,730
SIERRA LEONE	0		0
TOGO	2,004,843		2,004,843
TOTAL	37,637,412	51,972,068	89,609,480

- (ii) UA 20,084,507 from Year-End Bank balances (100%)
- (iii) UA51,972,068 from Arrears of Community Levy (68.5%)
- (iv) UA 4,067,459 from external funds (4%) - Commission (UA 1,014,262), WAHO (UA 2,730,527) and GIABA (UA 322,670).
- (v) UA 162,501 as other revenues, corresponding to a mobilisation rate of 46%.

Table 2: Community Income Implementation as at 31st May 2021

Chapters	Approved Budget	Actual Income (UA)	Actual Income (%)
Community Levy	185,739,379	37,637,412	20.26%
Year-End Bank Balances	20,084,507	20,084,507	100.00%
Arrears of Community Levy	75,894,454	51,972,068	68.48%
Arrears of Contribution	1,768,710	0	0.00%
Other Income	350,194	162,501	46.40%
Income from External Sources	114,207,382	4,067,459	3.56%
Total Income	398,044,626	113,923,947	28.62%

37. On the expenditure side, an implementation rate of 11% was achieved. This is comprised of UA 40,495,986 (13%) for Institutions, UA 1,969,791 (17%) for Statutory Obligations, UA 53,393 (0.1%) for Special Programmes and Interventions, and UA 2,538,616 (8%) for Peace & Security.

Table 3: Community Expenditure Implementation as at 31st May 2021

Chapters	Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure (UA)	Actual Expenditure (%)
Institutions	319,316,490	40,495,986	12.7%
Statutory Obligations	11,711,966	1,969,791	16.8%
Special Programmes & Interventions	36,702,319	53,393	0.1%
Peace & Security	30,313,851	2,538,616	8.4%
TOTAL	398,044,626	45,057,786	11.3%

38. The report also highlighted the absorption capacity of Institutions (actual expenditure vs actual income). Details are as follows:

Table 4: Budget Implementation Rates (vs. Actual Income)

INSTITUTION	EXPENDITURE
Commission	42.1%
Parliament	73.6%
Court	60.0%
WAHO	100.0%
GIABA	60.5%
Auditor General	100.0%

39. Following clarifications sought, Council adopted the report.

Item 3: Presentation and Consideration of the Auditor General's 2020 Annual Report

40. The Auditor General, Dr Alfred Braimah presented his 2020 Full Year Report to the 86th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers in accordance with Regulations C/REG/17/2017 establishing the Office of the Auditor General (OAG). The Report was presented in two parts, Part A and Part B.

41. Part A reported on the Summary of Observations of all Audits, Inspections and Investigations covering Operations, Human Resources, Finance, Programme Performance and Information Systems Audit of all Institutions, Agencies and Presidents Representation Offices except for PPDU and ARAA with an overall Audit Opinion of Limited Assurance. The Community-wide risk implications indicated a high incidence of Non-Compliance with Community Laws and Regulations which require immediate remedial actions by Management.

42. The AG also updated Council on the status of ceding-off Control responsibility to Management. He presented an updated timetable for the progressive handing over of this function to Management by the 30th of June 2021 to Council which was approved in the 84th session and indicated that though some effort is being made by management to take over, little progress has been made so far with the January 2021 and June 2021 deadlines not met.

43. On Risk Management, the AG updated Council on actions taken so far and informed Council that All ECOWAS Institutions would conclude work on their Risk Management documents by the end of December 2021. So far, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECOWAS Parliament, Finance Department of the Commission and ECREEE have fully completed and signed off their documents, while those of GIABA, WAHO and Seven other Departments of ECOWAS Commission are at different stages of completion.

44. The AG further emphasised the need for Management to complete the urgent recruitment of staff for the OAG having conducted interviews for the 2018 requirement. The recruitment of critical staff for the Finance, General Administration & Conferences and Human Resources Departments of the ECOWAS Commission, WAHO (RCSDC) and ERCA also directed by Council remain pending.

45. Part B reported on the Income & Expenditure, Community levy & Contribution Arrears, Community Financial Trends and Staffing Analysis of the Commission.

46. On Income and Expenditure, 33% and 35% of income was mobilised against the approved and adjusted budget respectively, with the largest proportion coming from Community Levy, the expenditure execution rate was 39% and 42% against the approved and adjusted budget.

respectively. However, against opening Cash Balances and Community Levy receipts by the Institutions, an average expenditure execution rate of 89% was achieved. This indicates that with an increase in Community Levy receipts, a higher level of expenditure execution can be expected.

47. On Staffing, staff representation per Member State, Gender Balance and Staff Age Analysis were reported on. The Male-Female ratio is 72:28 which as compared to AfDB target of 62:38 by 2025 shows good effort in the right direction. He further stressed the need for an ECOWAS target on gender mainstreaming as has been done by peer organizations such as the UN and AfDB.

48. The AG further updated Council on the status of the Directive on Staff Conversions, out of the 211 requests receives 178 were endorsed (84.4%), and these staff have already been converted. This has resulted in an improvement in the Permanent to Contract Staff Ratio from 59:41 in 2017 to 76:24 in 2020. The AG recommended to Council for a target Permanent to Contract Staff Ratio to be set for all future recruitments in line with peer practice. Focus on recruitment of staff in the age category of 20-29 and promotion of high performing G- staff into the P1 grade in line with the Staff Regulations was also recommended.

49. Council considered and approved the report of the Auditor General and directed Management to take the necessary steps:

- i. to implement all Directives, promptly and on an on-going basis.
- ii. to ensure on-going compliance with Supplementary Acts, Directives and Regulations and build the capacity of staff and use of rewards and sanctions to ensure compliance.
- iii. in collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General, management to take over the Control Function by the end of December 2021.
- iv. Set target for Permanent to Contract Staff Ratio for all future recruitments in line with peer practice and present to Council for approval in their last session for 2021.

50. Council encouraged Member States to promptly settle their Community Levy obligations in line with the Protocol. In addition, some member states raised challenges with the externalization of funds, and the Commission agreed to look into it.

51. After clarifications sought, Council adopted the Report and the recommendations contained therein. More specifically, Council granted exceptional approval for conversion into permanent position of Contract Staff who have met all the criteria set by Council except the condition for the existence of an absorption clause in the Donor Agreement provided (i) the positions are on the new Organogram and (ii) Staff are in the Category A to C lists in the Staff Skills Audit Report.

Item 4: Presentation and Consideration of Report of the 43rd Meeting of the Audit Committee




52. Mr Mongo Aharh-Kpessou the Chairperson of the Audit Committee presented the report of the 43rd Audit Committee Meeting to Council. The report focused on the following:

- i. Auditor General's 2020 report to be presented at the 86th session of the Council of Ministers;
- ii. Rotation of members of the Audit Committee;
- iii. Financial statements of the institutions and agencies for the fiscal year 2020 and those of the Community Levy for the fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- iv. Status of the implementation of the 2019 recommendations of the External Auditor and those of the Office of the Auditor General;

53. The Audit Committee thereafter made the following recommendations for Council's recommendation to the Authority for Adoption:

- 1) Approve the 2020 Financial Statements of all ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies.
- 2) Approve the Financial Statements for the fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 of the Community Levy.
- 3) Approve the Memorandum of Rotation of the Audit Committee members as proposed by the Office of the Auditor General and to adopt the following composition for the next three (3) Audit Committees:
 - i. For the fourth committee: Benin, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau
 - ii. For the fifth committee: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana and Cabo Verde,
 - iii. For the sixth committee: Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Togo
- 4) Approve the logo of the Office of the Auditor General
- 5) Instruct Management to actively pursue the recruitment process of the Office of the Auditor General in order to staff it adequately.
- 6) Instruct Management to rapidly initiate the recruitment process with a view to providing the Department of Finance, Administration and Human Resources with adequate, necessary and sufficient staff to ensure the smooth functioning of all ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies.
- 7) Instruct Management to implement all directives in the reports of the 83rd and 84th sessions of the Council of Ministers relating to the transfer of control activities.
- 8) Instruct Management to prepare a policy document on "Gender and Youth" to facilitate the integration of women and youth within ECOWAS.
- 9) Approve the 2020 report of the Office of the Auditor General.

54. Council commended the Audit Committee for the quality of the report presented and considered the report for adoption. Thereafter, Council adopted the recommendations of the Audit Committee. 

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 27th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

55. The final report of the 29th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by Mr Mohammed Nurudeen Ismaila, Head of the ECOWAS National Office in Ghana and Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC). The report covered the following:

- Presentation and consideration of Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the 28th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;
- Presentation and consideration of Report on the Financial situation of the Community;
- Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Placement of GIABA on the FATF Effectiveness Improvement Programme;
- Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum introducing Amendments to the Organisational Charts of some Community Institutions and Departments of the Commission; (Departments of Finance, General Administration and Conference, Social Affairs and Gender, Political Affairs, the Community Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Parliament);
- Auditor General's Annual Report;
- Presentation of a memorandum on status of Staff Skills Audit;
- Presentation of a memorandum on status of on-going recruitment;
- Presentation of status report on the preparation of ECOWAS Vision 2050.


56. After deliberations on the report, Council adopted all the recommendations contained therein.

Item 6: Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 85th Ordinary Session of Council

57. The Vice President of the Commission, H.E. Madam Finda Koroma, presented a status report on the implementation of the seven (7) tasks assigned to the ECOWAS Community Institutions by the Council of Ministers at its 85th Ordinary Session held via videoconference on 20th and 21st January 2021.

58. After presentation, Council took note of the report and urged the Commission to ensure faster completion of the outstanding tasks on the Dakar-Praia Corridor, and notably invited the remaining corridor countries to ratify the corridor Treaty.

Item 7: Presentation and Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 59th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

59. The President of the Commission presented the draft agenda of the 59th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government. 

60. After presentation, Council adopted the draft agenda annexed to this report.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT


Item 8: Presentation of a Memorandum on the report of the Ministerial Committee on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme

61. The Chair of the Ministerial Committee on the Single Currency, Mr Ken Ofori-Atta, Ghana's Minister of Finance, presented the memorandum informing Council of the developments related to the ECOWAS single currency. He recalled that the 57th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held on 7 September 2020 decided, among other things, to draw up a new Roadmap for the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme and conclude a new Convergence and Macroeconomic Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States. These two instruments were adopted on 4 June 2021 at the virtual Ministerial Committee meeting on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.

62. The Minister stated that the Roadmap for the launch of ECO by 2027 is composed of ten (10) programmes broken down into 33 projects and 135 activities :

- P1. Convergence and macroeconomic stability
- P2. Preparation of the institutional and legal framework for the Monetary Union
- P3. Preparation of the exchange rate policy framework
- P4. Preparation of the monetary policy framework
- P5. Harmonization of statistical standards and practices
- P6. Preparation of the framework for financial integration
- P7. Interconnection of payment systems
- P8. Harmonization of public finance frameworks
- P9. Capacity building of national and regional institutions
- P10. Launch of the ECO

63. Regarding the Convergence and Macroeconomic Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States, the Minister stated that it aims to (i) ensure the coordination of economic policies, (ii) strengthen the convergence of the economies of the Member States, (iii) consolidate macroeconomic stability and (iv) strengthen monetary cooperation. The Pact focuses on (a) the six (6) macroeconomic convergence criteria, (b) the convergence phase from 2022 to 2026, (c) the stability phase to start on 1 January 2027, (d) the multi-annual convergence programmes, as well as (d) the incentive and sanction mechanism to ensure the implementation of the multilateral surveillance mechanism.

64. Regarding the definition of the majority for the transition to the stability phase, the Ministerial Committee recommends that the definition be postponed to a later date through a Supplementary Act. 


65. In keeping with the decision of the Heads of State and Government at their 58th Ordinary Session held on 23 January 2021, following favourable opinion of the ECOWAS Parliament, the Ministerial Committee wishes to request the Council of Ministers to approve and transmit the Draft Convergence and Macroeconomic Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States to the Authority for adoption as well the roadmap for launching of the ECO for information.

66. Council endorsed the report.

Item 9: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry and of the 12th ECOMOT Meeting

67. The Report of the 12th meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Trade & Industry, which was held on 3 June 2021 was presented by the Commissioner for Trade, Customs & Free Movement, Mr Tei Konzi.

68. The Council of Ministers endorsed the recommendations of the 12th Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade & Industry. Specifically:

- Concerning the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC), the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the decision on the establishment of the ECOWAS RTFC.
- Concerning ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Network, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the decision on the establishment of the ECOWAS TPO Network.
- Concerning ECOWAS Business Council (EBC), the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the Regulation on the new statutes of the EBC.
- Concerning the Regulation relating to Harmonized Standards on Energy Performance for Electrical Appliances, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the three harmonized standards on electrical appliances.
- Concerning the Regulation relating to Harmonized Standards on Water and Sanitation, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the two harmonized standards on water and sanitation.
- Concerning the Regulation on Adoption of Procedures for the Harmonization of Technical Regulations in ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the Regulation.
- Concerning the Regulations on Harmonized Standards on Electrical Appliances, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the regulations on four regional harmonized standards on electrical appliances.
- Concerning the Regulation on Adoption of General Rules of the Certification Mark to ECOWAS Standards (ECOQMARK), the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed the Regulation. 

- Concerning the West Africa Post COVID -19 Industry Recovery Programme, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers endorsed its accompanying Regulation and recommended support for mobilization of funds for its implementation.


Item 10: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on adoption of the decision establishing and hosting the ECOWAS African Research and Innovation Forum (FARI)

69. The Council of Ministers considered the Commission's memorandum presented by Ghana's Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, on the establishment and hosting of the African Research and Innovation Forum (FARI), the specific objectives of which are to:

- Enhance the visibility of regional scientific and technological research;
- Create a regular forum for dialogue among all scientific and innovation stakeholders in the region, Africa and the world;
- Create new conditions to motivate researchers in the region to increase the number and quality of their research work;
- Create conditions for emulation between research institutions of ECOWAS Member States;
- Create a platform for sharing experiences and best practices between researchers, innovators, decision makers, the private sector, technical and financial partners in order to contribute to a better use of research results;
- Provide a platform for the presentation of innovative research results and technological discoveries from the ECOWAS region and elsewhere;
- Open new vistas of partnership between research and innovation stakeholders and the private sector.

70. The presentation indicated that FARI, whose draft decision was discussed by the Ministers of Science at their 3rd meeting held in Cotonou on 8 December 2018 and by the Community Parliament on 5 June 2021, contains six chapters, of which, chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 relate respectively to the structuring of the forum, choice of themes, prizes, frequency of the event, mode of appointment of members of the jury and the awarding authority.

71. It should be noted that the Ministers, at their virtual meeting held on 28 May, 2021 endorsed the decision to choose Nigeria as host country for the first edition of the Forum, which is scheduled to be held in 2022.

72. Council approved the memorandum establishing and hosting the African Research and Innovation Forum (FARI). 

Item 11: Presentation and Consideration of a memorandum on the Report of meeting of the Specialised Technical Ministerial Committee for Hydrology, Meteorology, Gender, and Disaster Risk Reduction on: - ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative; Regional Flood Risk Management Strategy; Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction

73. The Minister of Communication of Ghana, Mrs Ursula Owusu-Ekuful in her presentation stated that the Specialised Technical Ministerial Committee for Hydrology, Meteorology, Gender, and Disaster Risk Reduction validated three key documents on 22 April 2021 in Banjul, The Gambia during the 2nd Hydromet Forum and Disaster Risk Reduction platform meeting held on 20 - 22 April 2021 and recommended the adoption of the three strategic documents by the Council of Ministers.


74. The validated documents are: i) ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative; ii) Regional Flood Risk Management Strategy; iii) Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

75. Concerning the ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative, the objective of the ECOWAS Hydromet Initiative is to strengthen national and regional hydrological and meteorological services in West Africa in order to reduce disaster and climate risks in the region. The Initiative highlights challenges faced by the hydrological and meteorological services in the region and proposed the required capacity building and investments for better delivering in terms of satellite data & information treatment, seasonal forecast to mitigate disasters and provide information to the end users from aviation, agriculture, fisheries etc.

76. The socio-economic analysis of the Initiative shows that the contribution of improved Hydromet services to West Africa's socioeconomic development is expected to be high and the Cost-Benefit Ratio (BCR) ranges from 7 to 10 for each dollar invested.

77. The investment needed to overcome these challenges and will be funded with support from external partners with the aim of improving and sustaining hydrological and meteorological services.

78. Regarding the Regional Flood Risk Management Strategy, the objective is to respond to the gaps in knowledge management and governance in flood risk reduction at national and regional levels.

79. The Document has four strategic objectives which are: (i)improving collaboration and developing synergy of actions between the various institutions involved in flood risk management; (ii)harmonizing of the flood risk management approaches in the ECOWAS Member States; (iii) establishment and/or strengthening of flood warning systems and the dissemination of information on climate risks in the Member States and the region; (iv) mainstreaming the flood risks in development planning in Member States. 

80. The Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 – 2030, its development is informed by the increasing disaster events in the ECOWAS region which are happening at an alarming rate.

81. Women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities more impacted by disasters, constitute the most vulnerable, and are now considered as the “new generation of opportunity for disaster risk reduction”. The situation of women and children is more acute due to discriminatory land tenure systems, violent conflicts, and forced migration.


82. The objectives of the GSAP are to: i) strengthen and accelerate the effective implementation of a comprehensive ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction and Risk Management Framework at the regional level; ii) develop a comprehensive, effective, and practical policy for mainstreaming gender considerations into Disaster Risk Management; iii) identify windows of opportunity for resource mobilisation to enhance the inclusion of women in Disaster Risk Management policy and decision-making frameworks within ECOWAS.

83. The Specialised Technical Ministerial Committee for Hydrology, Meteorology, Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction made the following recommendations, among others:

- i. set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure effective implementation of decisions and recommendations from the second ECOWAS Hydromet and Disaster Risk Reduction Forum;
- ii. conduct assessment of the impacts of disasters on youth, people with disabilities and marginalised groups and develop their respective action plans;
- iii. strengthen research action, capacity building and technology transfer on climate and meteorology to improve data access and dissemination and early warning systems in the region;
- iv. strengthen collaboration with financial and technical partners to identify available funding mechanisms to facilitate the effective implementation of the endorsed documents.

84. After the presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 12: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the adoption of Regional Harmonised Standards

85. The Commission presented three (3) memoranda for the consideration as provided in the Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry held on 3 June 2021. The Ministerial meeting was preceded by a National Experts Meeting on 27 May 2021. All Member States participated in the Meeting. 

86. The main objective of these memoranda is to request the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to endorse the following Harmonised Standards, Regulations and West Africa Post COVID-19 Industry Recovery Programme.

I. Five (5) Draft Harmonised Regional Standards on Energy Performance for Electrical Appliances and Water and Sanitation

1. ECOSTAND 081: 2020 – Minimum Energy Performance Standard for Comfort Electric Fans.
2. ECOSTAND 084: 2020 – Minimum Energy Performance Standard for TVs.
3. ECOSTAND 085: 2020 – Minimum Energy Performance Standard for Electric Storage Water Heaters.
4. ECOSTAND 086: 2021 (ISO 24521) –Guidelines for on-site management of basic domestic wastewater services.
5. ECOSTAND 087: 2021 (ISO 30500) – Autonomous Sanitation Systems.

II. Regulations on adoption of Procedures for Harmonisation of Technical Regulations and Harmonised Technical Regulations on Standards relating to Electrical Appliances and Regulation Adopting General Rules for Certification of ECOWAS Standards.

1. Regulations on adoption of Procedures for Harmonisation of Technical Regulations in ECOWAS.
2. Technical regulations on four (4) harmonised standards on electrical appliances:
 - a. Regulation for application of ECOSTAND 053 for network lighting service lamps manufactured, assembled, imported or sold in all ECOWAS countries to be mandatory.
 - b. Regulation on application of ECOSTAND 054 for off-grid lighting products manufactured, assembled, imported or sold in all ECOWAS countries to be mandatory.
 - c. Regulation on application of ECOSTAND 071-1 for alternative current refrigeration devices (AC) manufactured, assembled, imported or sold in all ECOWAS countries to be mandatory.
 - d. Regulation on application of ECOSTAND 071-2 for residential and commercial air conditioners manufactured, assembled, imported or sold in all ECOWAS countries to be mandatory
3. Regulation on adoption of general rules of Certification of ECOWAS Standards (ECOQMARK).

III. West Africa Post COVID-19 Industry Recovery Programme 

87. The programme was developed in collaboration with United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) to support industries in ECOWAS countries to recover from the impact of the pandemic. The programme will be jointly implemented with UEMOA Commission.

88. The Commission requested the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to endorse the following recommendations:

- i. The Regulations relating to the five Harmonised Standards as ECOWAS regional harmonised standards.
- ii. The Regulations relating to: (i) Procedures for Harmonisation of Technical Regulations, (ii) Harmonised Standards on Electrical Appliances and General Rules of the Certification Mark to ECOWAS Standards.
- iii. The Regulations relating to West Africa Post COVID-19 Industry Recovery Programme and mobilisation of funds for its implementation.

89. After the presentation, Council endorsed the report and the accompanying Regulations.

Item 13: Presentation of a Memorandum on the Integrated Human Capital Development (HCD) Strategy for West Africa

90. The Minister for Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of The Gambia, Mr Seedy Keita provided a status update on the HCD strategy. He informed Council that HCD country assessments have been conducted in fourteen (14) Member States. Nigeria was not included in these assessment as it had already done its own assessment prior to the launch of this regional initiative. The ministerial validation of country assessment reports is ongoing, with Niger, Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Nigeria, Cabo Verde, and Liberia to hold validation meetings before the end of June.

91. Capacity building on project management is also in progress.

92. The Vice President informed Council that the HCD strategy is being developed with the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, that have provided \$3,992,000 for the project over a 2 year-period, while the ECOWAS Commission has contributed \$500,000 in 2019, \$1,818,132 in 2020 and \$1,719,881 in 2021.

93. A study on Gender Transformative Human Capital Development will be launched this year to strengthen the gender component of the Strategy.

94. Council endorsed the memorandum. 

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 14: Presentation of a Memorandum on status report on the Legal Review for the accession of Third Countries to the ECOWAS Treaty

95. This Memorandum is to update the Council of Ministers on the status of progress on the legal framework for accession of third countries to the ECOWAS Treaty.

96. The foregoing was decided by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at its 52nd Ordinary Session held in Abuja on 16 December 2017, following receipt of several applications for the granting of different third country statuses, in particular:

- Morocco's request for membership status;
- Tunisia's request for observer status; and
- Mauritania's request for associate membership.

97. In light of these requests, it came to light that the existing legal and institutional framework, namely the Revised ECOWAS Treaty and Supplementary Protocols, did not provide the appropriate legal basis for adequate decision-making.

98. The Authority therefore decided that the determination of accession to the ECOWAS Treaty as well as the granting of status to third countries should be preceded by the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework which should constitute the legal basis for such decision.

99. Accordingly, it set up a committee of Heads of State and Government made up of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, the Republic of Ghana, the Republic of Guinea, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Togolese Republic to adopt the Terms of Reference and oversee the conduct of a comprehensive study on the implications of such accession.

100. To that end, the Authority instructed the President of the Commission to immediately initiate the process of preparing an appropriate Community Act that would set out the decision-making process within the Community in accordance with the provisions of Article 9, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty.

101. After validation of the terms of reference by the Committee of Heads of State and Government, the Commission, through a call for tenders, selected three (3) legal experts from ECOWAS Member States to carry out the study to serve as the basis for a Community Act governing the granting of ECOWAS membership, as well as an appropriate decision-making procedure.

102. In accordance with ECOWAS procedures, the report of the study was submitted for validation by a joint group of experts, Foreign Affairs and Justice Ministers from the five Member

States of the Presidential Committee, at a meeting held in Accra from 15 to 18 February 2021. It should be noted that the review of the study, which was completed in 2019, was delayed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world in early 2020.

103. Council took note of the work in progress regarding this item and invited the Commission to finalise this assignment by the end of 2021.

Item 15: Presentation of a Memorandum on the Status of Vision 2050


104. The Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission presented the status report on the preparation of the ECOWAS Vision 2050. In her presentation, she noted that the first draft of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 Blueprint was produced in March 2021 and it is currently undergoing internal review by the Community Institutions in preparation for technical validation at the expert and ministerial levels and endorsement and adoption by the Council of Ministers and the Authority of Heads of State and Government respectively.

105. The presentation also provided details of the key activities and outputs that have been delivered during each phase of the 5-Phase Roadmap approved by the Council of Ministers for the development of the Vision in December 2018. She emphasised that the development of the Vision followed an inclusive, consultative, and evidence-based approach and provided details of some of the stakeholder consultations carried out and the assessments and studies conducted in order to gather relevant inputs for the development of the Vision.

106. Finally, she presented the sets of activities that will lead to the adoption of the final version of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 Blueprint by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

107. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 16: Presentation of a Memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' applications for International and Regional Statutory Positions

108. With a view to harmonize and give more chances to ECOWAS Member States applications to vacant positions in regional and international organisations, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government¹ requested Member States applying for these positions to submit their candidatures to the Chair of the Council of Ministers for arbitration in order to come up with single candidatures for different positions, and subsequently set up in 2016 a 5-member Ministerial Committee, made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, which agreed on criteria² for selecting candidates and emphasised on the importance for all countries of the Community to give full support to successful candidates. 

¹ Refers 49th Ordinary Summit on 4 June 2016 in Dakar, and the Chairperson of the Authority decision's on August 2016

² Quality of applications (i), Solidarity (ii), Geographical spread (iii), Alphabetical rotation (iv).

109. As of 20th May 2021, the Commission received a total of 29 requests for support from the ECOWAS Member States for 21 vacant positions, out of which 13 positions are still available and are yet to be filled as of 17th May 2021 while 8 have been already occupied. Among the positions that have been filled, mainly those regarding the African Union, ECOWAS demonstrated great leadership in harmonising and agreeing on the candidates to represent the Region during those competitions.

110. In order to avoid duplication of ECOWAS candidatures, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government through its Extraordinary Session held on 2 February 2021 decided to prioritise support for the candidature of Nigeria to the post of Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union (AU) and also to give the second Commissioner position to be allocated to the West Africa Region to Burkina Faso, taking into account the gender parity. This strategy helped to secure those positions that are among the best for ECOWAS.

111. Ghana (for Deputy Chairperson position), The Gambia (for Deputy Chairperson position and Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment), Sierra Leone (for Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry & Mining), and Côte d'Ivoire (for Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development position) were pre-selected by the AU for statutory positions but gave up to favour Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

112. In order to facilitate its work, the Committee pleads with the Member States to (i) systematically notify to the ECOWAS Commission their applications to international and regional positions, as well as their requests for the Community support; and to (ii) provide accurate and complete information regarding the positions i.e. CV translated in the ECOWAS official languages, election dates, etc.).

113. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 17: Presentation of a Memorandum on the outcome of the Jury's deliberations for the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI) held in Niamey, from 6 to 8 April 2021

114. In the area of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), Dr Kwaku Afriyie, Ghana's Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, presented the report of the 2020 Jury session on the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI) held in Niamey, Niger from 6 to 8 April 2021, to Council for information.

115. The report, which was validated by the 3rd meeting of STI Ministers held virtually on 28 May 2021, highlighted the importance of this programme for the region given that its main objective is to respond to the many challenges of the research and innovation sector (obsolescence and

degradation of equipment and infrastructure, low production of researchers, etc.). It also allows for the development of regional research programmes with an impact on populations and the establishment of regional consortia of researchers involving researchers from the three (3) language groups (Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone), to boost regional integration and succession planning by supervising and introducing young people to research activities.

116. At the end of its deliberations and based on the projects reviewed for the selected disciplines (Pharmacopoeia and Chemistry) and in the absence of any eligible project in the area of Chemistry, the Jury proposed the following consortia as winners according to their position:


- The Consortium led by Dr Victorien Tamègnon Dougnon (Benin) on the theme: "Formulation of active phytomedicines against antibiotic-resistant bacteria and coronavirus: exploration of the potential from African flora". This study aims to improve the level of scientific knowledge on medicinal plants active against antibiotic-resistant bacteria and coronavirus. The consortium comprises researchers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana and Togo. The project will also build the capacity of the six (6) young scientists in green pharmacy and bioinformatics.
- The Consortium led by Prof N'Guessan Jean David (Cote d'Ivoire) on the theme: "Observational study and Phytomedicine galenic formulation for the treatment of Malaria in 3 ECOWAS countries. This project aims to propose two effective and safe phytomedicines in the therapeutic arsenal for the treatment of malaria in ECOWAS countries. This project proposes the development of plants that WAHO listed in its book West African Pharmacopoeia, published in 2013 and adopted by the Heads of State. It aims to provide a response to malaria, an endemic disease in the majority of ECOWAS countries and the main reason for consultation, hospitalisation and the main cause of mortality and morbidity among women and children under the age of five. The Consortium includes partners from Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. The project will propose two drugs against malaria and support 1 PhD and 2 Masters' programmes for the future of our universities.

117. These two projects will receive a grant amount of USD 200,000 each.

118. At the end of the presentation, Council took note of the outcome of the Jury's deliberations and encouraged the Commission to continue the implementation of the programme.

119. Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 18: Presentation of a Memorandum on status of Staff Skills Audit

120. The Commissioner for Human Resources made a presentation on status of Staff Skills Audit. In his presentation, he stated that as part of the ongoing ECOWAS institutional reform, the Heads of State and Government at the 51st Summit held in June 2017 in Monrovia, Liberia. 

instructed the Commission to undertake a skills audit of staff of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies.

121. The overall objective of the Community Staff Skills Audit is to assess the skills of staff of ECOWAS Institutions and Specialised Agencies and make recommendations in order to provide adequate information on the profile of each staff, thus enabling decision-makers to determine an appropriate skills development plan and other measures required to fill the identified gaps. This will provide ECOWAS with a clear picture of each staff's skills, academic background, competence levels, gaps, and training and development needs.

122. For the purpose of the exercise and following the terms of reference, the Consultant identified five competence groups, ranging from A to E, which Management approved:

- i. **Group A:** Staff with personal development potential, who can benefit from positive career development.
- ii. **Group B:** Staff who are performing well and are capable of improving their performance.
- iii. **Group C:** Staff who need training to improve their performance and who should therefore receive targeted training.
- iv. **Group D:** Staff who are struggling to perform their duties fully, due to lack of capacity, interest, or motivation, but who can still improve their performance.
- v. **Group E:** Staff who lack the capacity, training, and motivation to perform their duties effectively within ECOWAS.

123. Out of a total number of 1050 staff, nine-hundred and twenty six (926) were assessed and one hundred and twenty-four (124) were exempted from the assessment. Following a series of interviews and assessments, the results show that 83.09% of staff (762) have a skill profile that matches the needs of their position (Group A to C).

124. Staff members in Groups D and E, representing 16.92% of the workforce (155), have difficulty or are unable to perform their duties. These two groups were the subject of a specific analysis because of the difficulty in placing them in the optimal operation of the Institution.

125. It was noted that 18.42% of ECOWAS staff (169) are over 57 years and are between 1 and 5 years from retirement. Nearly one-third of this group is at least 60 years old.

126. Thus, a closer analysis reveals that there is a significant overlap between ECOWAS officers (169) who are over 57 years old and those who are assessed and classified in competence groups D and E (155). Seven (7) implementation committees, including community institutions were put in place.

127. After clarifications sought, Council took note of the state of implementation. 

Item 19: Presentation of a Memorandum on the Fund for Regional Stabilization and Sustainable Development in Fragile Regions in West Africa

128. The Vice President provided a status update on the RSDP, which was established with the support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), to create sustainable economic opportunities for youth, women, and other vulnerable groups in ECOWAS Member States, facing instability and fragility.

129. She informed Council that the project Steering Committee made up of representatives from the ECOWAS Commission and the BMZ have agreed on the eligibility criteria for the selection of beneficiary countries. The eligibility criteria agreed were as follows: Prevalence of new crisis or new transitions; level of ECOWAS engagement in the field of Peace and Security; the relevance of the countries in the context of level of donor presence; the level of development need, and the existence or setting up of *Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public* (AGETIPs) as the main implementation partners.


130. Based on these criteria, Guinea Bissau and Mali have been identified as most eligible countries for the first phase of the regional project in the next 18 months. Joint needs assessment missions by ECOWAS, GIZ and KfW are scheduled for June and July 2021 in Guinea Bissau and Mali to assess the development needs of the countries and explore areas of intervention.

131. As part of the ECOWAS-German development cooperation, the German Government made new financial commitments to the project in 2021, bringing the total for financial cooperation to **€ 35 million**, and technical cooperation to **€ 26 million**. The official launch of the project has been scheduled for the third quarter of 2021.

132. Council took note of the information provided. Council also took note of Niger's request to be considered as the 3rd pilot country by the steering committee of the programme.

Item 20: Memorandum on the Status of Implementation of Recommendations following the Forensic Audit of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies for the 2013-2017 Period

133. A forensic audit of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies was decided upon by the 51st Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Monrovia on 4 June 2017. Accordingly, the terms of reference were approved by the Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in Lomé on 7 and 8 July 2018. Ernst & Young United Kingdom was selected following an international call for tender for the audit exercise.

134. The Firm commenced work in March 2019 and submitted its report to the Council of Ministers on 26 June 2019. The report highlighted several gaps notably in the internal control system for the audit period. It equally revealed financial crimes, which were further investigated. 

135. It is worth noting that steps have been put in place, with a view to making ECOWAS adhere to international standards particularly through the establishment of an effective and transparent management system. This memorandum is a follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations and aims to provide an update on the implementation of the decisions of the Authority on the forensic audit.

136. At the 21 December 2019 session, the Authority of Heads of State and Government, on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, adopted the following decisions to pursue tighter internal control, improved governance, and transparency in the management of ECOWAS:- Fine-tune the plan of action for the implementation of recommendations; Fast-track work underway to determine the level of involvement of officers guilty of proven fraudulent acts especially at GIABA, and initiate necessary action as appropriate; Strengthen the capacity of the Department of Finance and Office of the Auditor General through the immediate recruitment of experienced professionals; Initiate the setting up of an electronic and manual archiving system for safekeeping administrative and accounting documents.

137. The status of implementation of the decisions is presented hereunder:

- i. Plan of action for the implementation of recommendations;
- ii. Level of involvement of officers and disciplinary action;
- iii. Recruitment for the Department of Finance and Office of the Auditor General;
- iv. Electronic and manual archiving system for the safekeeping administrative and accounting documents.

138. In consideration of the conclusions of the forensic audit which highlighted the areas of weakness in the management system, all ECOWAS departments are now involved in the process of strengthening institutional control and governance. Regular actions to ensure that procedures are followed in accordance with regulations are being enhanced and consolidated. Accordingly, the handover of the control system to management is being expedited with a view to implementing new control management functions and tools.

139. Council thereafter took note of the Report.

STRICT CLOSED-DOOR SESSION

Item 21: Report of the Extra-Ordinary Session of Council on Institutional Reform

140. During its Extraordinary Session held on 2nd February 2021, the Authority noted that the tenure of the current statutory appointees comes to an end in February 2022, and that there is need to revisit the optimal structure and size of the new Commission and the other Institutions, the modalities for the allocation of statutory positions as well as efforts to

further streamline ECOWAS operating costs. To this end, the Authority called on **H. E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo**, with the support of the Ad-hoc Ministerial Committee on Institutional Reform, to lead the reflection on this issue.

141. In compliance with the above decision, the Chair of the Authority directed the President of the Commission to submit a report that would facilitate the reflection on the issue. A draft report was finalized by the President of Commission through an inclusive internal consultation and was submitted as a working document to the Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Institutional Reform made up the following Member States: Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

142. The deliberations of the Adhoc Ministerial Committee was submitted to an Extra-Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held via videoconference on 7th June, 2021. Council of Ministers further discussed the issue during its 86th Ordinary Session held in Accra on the 16 and 17 June 2021.

143. In defining the optimal structure of the new Commission, the fourteen Council Members present, in the absence of Mali, unanimously agreed for a reduction in the size of the Commission as a crucial aspect of the reform. In relation to the extent of the reduction, three (3) Member States expressed views in favour of a 9-Member Commission while the eleven other countries expressed preference for a 7-Member Commission.

144. It should be noted that, in the case of the 9-Member Commission, the total number of Statutory positions across all institutions is seventeen (17), considering Auditor General of Community Institutions, DG GIABA, DG WAHO and 5 Judges in the Community Court of Justice. This means that there are more statutory positions than the total number of Member States. Therefore, statutory positions in other Institutions will be allocated to Member States with no position in the Commission; and there will be two(2) remaining statutory positions to be allocated.

145. For the 7-Member Commission, there are a total of fifteen (15) statutory positions across all Institutions. Therefore, Member States not at the Commission will occupy the other statutory positions. All Member States will have one statutory position.

146. Council of Ministers agreed to discuss the modalities for the allocation of the statutory positions, once the Authority decides on the optimal size of the Commission, during a meeting of the AdHoc Ministerial Committee and before an Extraordinary Session to be convened by the Chair of the Council.



147. It should be underlined that the adoption of a 7 Member Commission or a 9 Member Commission, would automatically generate savings resulting from the reduction of number of Commissioners and the Executive Assistants (EAs) attached to them. These savings are related to the emoluments of Commissioners and the EAs as well as other administrative and logistics savings including travel costs. The amount of savings would vary depending on the structure that would be adopted.

148. Irrespective of the adopted size of the Commission, Council members unanimously emphasized the necessity to streamline operation costs across all ECOWAS Institutions, in line with the decision of the Authority.

Item 22: Memorandum on the proposed mechanism of rotation of ECOWAS Member States' Candidatures to the Chairmanship of the African Union

149. In the framework of facilitating the designation of candidatures from the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the African Union (AU) chairmanship position when its turn arrives, the Authority of the ECOWAS, during its Extraordinary session held on 2 February 2021, instructed the President of the Commission to propose for adoption, a clear mechanism to ensure that each ECOWAS Member State has a legitimate opportunity to chair the Assembly of the African Union.

150. This is in line with the provision of the Rule N°15 of the Rules of Procedures of the Assembly of the Union which stipulates that on the basis of rotation and agreed criteria, each of the five (5) regions that composes the Union shall designate a candidate to be elected as Chairperson of the Union for a period of one (1) year. This implies that each of these five (5) Regions³ of the AU is entitled to alternatively chair the AU once every five years.

151. Currently for the 2021-2022 period, the central Africa region is chairing the Assembly through H.E. Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo, that will be succeeded in 2022-2023 by the Western Africa region, for which the Authority of the ECOWAS have designated HE. Macky SALL, President of the Republic Senegal.

152. The proposed rotation mechanism for ECOWAS Member States to chair the Assembly of the African Union considered as prerequisite criteria "not being under the AU sanctions" as well as compliance with ECOWAS relevant protocols (notably unconstitutional changes of power and Community Levy payment). Moreover, consideration is given to important criteria such as (i) Linguistic Group alternation; (ii) The weight of each linguistic Group in the rotation process (5 Anglophones; 8 Francophones; 2 Lusophones) and; (iii) Where a consensus is built on a candidate not emanating from the applicable zone (Francophone, Anglophone or Lusophone) the

³ Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa and Northern Africa

consensus should prevail. In that instance the next selection process should follow the mechanism where it was broken from.

153. Based on a combination using the selected criteria, and considering 3 cycles that are 2022-2048, 2052-2078, and 2082-2108, within which three (03) francophone Member States, two (02) Anglophone Member States and one (01) Lusophone Member State will alternatively, and in line with principles of predictability, transparency, and fairness, occupy the chairmanship position of the AU, and this set consequently a clear rotation mechanism for the western Africa region (ECOWAS) for the 2022 to 2108 period.

154. Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 23: Consideration of appeals of staff dismissed in connection with Forensic Audit

155. This item of the closed-door session relates to an administrative appeal filed by five staff members punished for fraud in respect of purchase of IT equipment at GIABA. Following an initial brief by the President of the Commission, the Director General of GIABA presented the memorandum, and which described the fraud process, the responsibilities of the actors and the process leading to their sanction, in accordance with the provisions of the staff regulations. The Director-General of GIABA also presented the arguments of the staff members to justify their appeals.

156. Following this presentation, members of the Council of Ministers highlighted the following issues:

- a) The need for firmness in order to prevent such acts from happening in the future;
- b) In Council's view, the sanctions seem too lenient for acts of such gravity;
- c) The inadequacy of the procedure where staff members file appeals to Council, which is a decision-making body and not a management body. This aspect will have to be revised in the new staff regulations;
- d) The strengthening of management control procedures to prevent and avoid fraud.

157. After deliberations, Council rejected the appeal made by staff and took the following decisions:

- a) Confirmation of the sanctions taken by Management;
- b) Withdrawal of pension for the dismissed staff members;
- c) Initiation of legal proceedings against the staff found guilty with a view to claiming reimbursement of the sums embezzled.

Item 24: Any Other Business 

158. The Republic of Guinea Bissau raised the issue of the need for the Commissioner for Education, Science and Culture, the late Professor Leopoldo Amado to be replaced following his demise this year. The Commission assured Council that after discussion that this issue is being resolved.

159. Ghana raised the issue of non-acceptance of Ghanaian Export Consignments under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) by Benin Customs Authorities. On this issue, the Council of Ministers invited Benin, Ghana and the ECOWAS Commission to urgently organize a ministerial level meeting with a view to finding an amicable solution.

Item 25: Adoption of the Report

160. The report was adopted after amendments.

Item 26: Closing Ceremony

161. The Chairperson of Council, Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, in her closing remarks, thanked Council Members for their active participation and constructive contributions during the Council meeting. Thereafter, she declared the Eighty-Sixth Ordinary Session of Council closed, and wished all participants safe journey back to their respective destinations.

DONE AT ACCRA THIS 17TH DAY OF JUNE 2021



HON. SHIRLEY AYORKOR BOTCHWEY

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

**CHAIRPERSON
FOR: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**COMUNIDADE ECONOMICA DOS
ESTADOS DA AFRICA OCIDENTAL**

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES**



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

VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at the Eighty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers held in Accra on 16 and 17 June 2021 express their profound gratitude to His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana and Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, and to the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana, for the warm African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Accra and for the excellent facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the success of their meeting.

DONE AT ACCRA THIS 17TH DAY OF JUNE 2021

COUNCIL 