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WEST AFRICAN STATES



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OF THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
MR LANSANA KOUYATÉ**

**Executive Secretariat
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INTRODUCTION

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

1. My annual report for December 1998/1999 was devoted to a few reflections on the ECOWAS strategic options that our organisation will be focusing on in the years ahead. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of ECOWAS this year, I am pleased to say that we have studied and discussed those ideas in great detail, and we have adopted lines of action that will revitalise the regional integration process, and provide the necessary foundation for the development of our national economies.
2. Within a context where dynamic growth hinges on how successfully national economies are integrated into the regional and world trade system as we learn to adapt to the exigencies of international competition and improve returns on investments, regional integration offers the best guarantee for improving our development prospects. The Member States of the West African region are much aware of this, and have embarked on an ambitious programme to integrate their economies by creating a single, enlarged and competitive market within ECOWAS.
3. The last Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held in Lome in December 1999, and the UEMOA/ECOWAS ministerial meeting held in Bamako in January 2000 marked a turning point in the life of our Community.
4. Fully aware of the development challenges facing West Africa as it responds to the imperative of globalisation, the Heads of State and Government, at their Lome session, again affirmed their political will to strengthen ECOWAS and to implement Community programmes that will stimulate the growth and development of West African

- 11. I must, at this juncture, express my deep appreciation to His Excellency Alpha Oumar KONARE, President of the Republic of Mali and current Chairman of ECOWAS, whose strong leadership qualities have considerably contributed to the acceleration of the integration of West Africa. Indeed, we all should reflect deeply on President Konare's great vision of a West African Federation that will be the forerunner of the African Union . I have every hope that this vision for Africa, which is the main theme of the 23rd Summit of Heads of State and Government, will be received with great enthusiasm.**
- 12. This is also an auspicious moment for me to congratulate Their Excellencies, Koumba Yala Kobde Nhanca, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, on their election to the highest office in their respective countries. I add my voice to those of the entire staff of the Community Institutions in wishing them a successful tenure, and happiness for the people of Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.**
- 13. In Chapter I of this report , I shall be presenting a brief account of recent developments in the West African economy and highlighting a few prospects. Chapter II focuses on the implementation of Community programmes, especially those which have been designed to accelerate the West African regional integration process.**

CHAPTER I

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WEST AFRICAN ECONOMY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

14. As indicated in the December 1999 annual report, the overall economic performance in West Africa was only 3.2% in 1998, slightly higher than the population growth rate of 2.9%. After nearly two decades of economic reforms, the economic situation of West Africa as a whole, though positive, continues to be precarious while its performance remains less than satisfactory.
15. However, it can be said to the region's credit that a number of ECOWAS Member States have succeeded in creating a suitable environment for microeconomic stability and sustainable growth. Those countries which have made sustained efforts in this direction: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal recorded significant economic growth rates and financial flows¹. In several other ECOWAS Member States, the picture is one of huge public deficits and high inflation, a clear indication of poor economic management. This calls for immediate remedial action, principally through the implementation of credible and growth-oriented economic reform programmes.
16. In addition, the issue of poverty looms large on the horizon for the economies of all West African countries, both those that have performed well and those that have failed to make adequate progress. Even in those cases where the macroeconomic performance has improved, there has been no corresponding improvement in the quality of life.

¹ Refer to December 1999 annual report on detailed economic performance of ECOWAS Member States.

17. Aware of the magnitude of these challenges and the inadequacies of some of their intervention instruments, such as the enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) and the sectoral adjustment credits, the IMF and the World Bank have introduced a new facility for poverty alleviation and growth and outlined a new framework for integrated development which takes into account every aspect of growth and development.

Highlights of Economic Policies in West Africa

18. A number of encouraging developments have been noted with regard to the economic policies pursued by ECOWAS Member States since the last summit of Heads of State and Government held in Lome in December 1999. The macroeconomic reform process has been consolidated and accelerated in most of the member countries. Most have made an effort to balance their budgets through better tax revenue generation - more efficient tax collection, simplified tax structure and expanded tax base.
19. In several of the countries, monetary policy has continued to focus primarily on mobilisation of internal resources through a policy of positive real interest rates. Nigeria scrapped the two-tier exchange system, and by reducing inflation, the countries in the franc zone succeeded in making their export more competitive .
20. Nonetheless, ECOWAS countries had a negative external showing on account of the rise in the price of oil, depressed earnings from certain agricultural produce and from some minerals such as gold, and also because of the rise in the exchange rate of the dollar. This also put a strain on domestic balances.
21. Most ECOWAS countries have forged ahead with restructuring and with the reorganisation and privatisation of public enterprises, as they seek to improve performance by ensuring more efficient and

in per capita income of about 2.2%. Nevertheless, these figures presuppose a conducive external environment and do not take into account a number of risk factors such as unfavourable climatic conditions, economic policy setbacks and a resurgence of civil strife.

25. The growth recovery expected by 2005 will still not be adequate to enable West Africa to meet its needs and to fully realise its growth potential. Over half of the West African population lives in abject poverty, with a daily income below 1 US dollar. Poverty eradication will depend on strong, sustained growth that can only be realised through human resource development in key areas such as education and health, improved nutrition and access to safe drinking water.
26. With the current population growth rate of West Africa, annual economic growth must attain 7 - 8% if the trend towards unemployment and poverty is to be halted and reversed. Negative external shocks such as a drop in commodity prices, deteriorating terms of trade and hostile climatic conditions can seriously impede attainment of this growth target. West Africa is extremely vulnerable on account of its heavy dependence on commodity exports. Fluctuating export earnings create an unstable environment. This negatively affects the region's internal and external balances, discourages private investments and impairs the ability of the private sector to spend even on physical infrastructure investment programmes.
27. For West Africa, the long-term solution lies in diversifying its production base and exports, and pursuing regional integration with greater vigour. There is now a broad consensus on the general policies and strategies that should be adopted to accelerate and sustain growth. In essence, it will be necessary to:

- increase investment volume and yields, not least by intensifying economic reforms and promoting private-sector development;
 - improve the calibre of manpower through education, particularly by training a large technical workforce, providing adequate primary health care and improving nutrition;
 - establish a legal and regulatory framework for enterprises to provide better business opportunities for the private sector;
 - invest in the upgrading of physical infrastructures: roads, telecommunications and energy in order to reduce the cost of conducting business, encourage enterprise promotion, and improve competitiveness;
 - take adequate measures to lay a solid foundation for long term development; environmental protection and gender equality;
 - promote regional economic integration by strengthening ECOWAS.
28. With regard to the integration process, adopting a regional approach to the development process would enable us to capitalise on the positive results of growth and to eliminate structural obstacles to the development of West African economies.
29. Beyond all these various measures, ECOWAS has put in place a workable framework for action to ensure formulation and implementation of Community development programmes. All that is required is to ensure that these programmes are implemented effectively in order to guarantee accelerated growth and development for West Africa.

CHAPTER 2

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME

I) ACCELERATION OF THE WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESS
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30. This chapter gives an account of measures taken by the Community and the results achieved since the last statutory meetings held in Lome in December 1999. Its four sections deal with the acceleration of the integration process in West Africa, other ECOWAS socio-economic programmes, the activities of the ECOWAS Fund, institutional and financial matters, and regional peace and security.

31. The Executive Secretariat has accorded priority attention to the harmonisation of its programmes with those of UEMOA. This is in implementation of the decisions taken by the Authority of Heads of State and Government at its meeting in Lome in December 1999, as well as the guidelines given by the January 2000 UEMOA/ECOWAS Bamako ministerial meeting. The Secretariat is also actively involved in moves to establish a second monetary zone and to create a borderless ECOWAS zone.

1. Harmonisation of ECOWAS and UEMOA programmes

32. At their February 2000 meeting in Ouagadougou, the two organisations exchanged views on their cooperation and integration programmes, and drew up a programme of action in the following areas:

- convergence of macro-economic policies and money, development financing and promotion of the private sector;
- establishment of a Common Market;
- harmonisation of sectoral policies;

Harmonisation of ECOWAS and UEMOA programmes

Convergence of ECOWAS and UEMOA economic and financial policies

33. In the case of UEMOA, provision is made for the application of a multilateral surveillance mechanism aimed at reorganising the macroeconomic structure of the Member States and strengthening their common currency.

34. In the case of ECOWAS, convergence of the macroeconomic policies and performances of its Member States is a pre-condition for the creation of a single currency. Convergence has to precede the creation of the ECOWAS monetary zone.

35. Adoption of the multilateral surveillance procedure in the two organisations calls for the following measures to be taken:

- definition of convergence criteria and standards, which presupposes the harmonisation, ready availability and accuracy of statistical aggregates;
- harmonisation of the legal framework, accounting procedure and statistics for public finance;
- definition of an institutional framework for the application of the multilateral surveillance procedure.

- a) Harmonisation status of convergence criteria and related standards in ECOWAS and UEMOA.

36. The convergence criteria applicable in the UEMOA zone and in ECOWAS may be summarised as follows:

- in the two convergence systems criteria are classified as primary and secondary according to their importance;
- the selected indicators in the two systems do not necessarily coincide;
- some indicators common to the two systems are classified differently and are therefore not always accorded the same degree of importance;
- the target dates for convergence are different : 2002 for UEMOA, and 2003 for ECOWAS.

Primary Indicators

37. The indicators of budget deficit/GDP and inflation rate are convergence criteria in both systems.

38. In the UEMOA system, the ratio of primary budget balance to GDP, should be higher than or equal to 0% by 2002. In the ECOWAS system on the other hand, the ratio of budget deficit excluding grants, to GDP, should be equal to or less than 4% by 2003.

39. Inflation rate - the UEMOA system adopts a maximum average annual inflation rate of 3%, while the ECOWAS target is a rate of 5% by 2002, calculated at an annual sliding rate.

40. The UEMOA system retains indebtedness as an indicator, indebtedness being defined as when the ratio of current public internal and external debt to nominal GDP is equal to or below 70%. This criterion is not explicitly applied by ECOWAS. However, during the preliminary stages of work on the definition of the reference value of the ratio of budget deficit to GDP, a maximum indebtedness ceiling of 80% was adopted, corresponding to the average public debt of the ECOWAS Member States for the period from 1995 to 1997.

41. With regard to variation of internal and external arrears of payment, UEMOA has adopted the indicator of non accumulation of current internal and external arrears of payment. Member states are required to liquidate arrears outstanding as at 31 December 1999, by 2002. The ECOWAS indicator on arrears of payment differs from that of UEMOA in two respects:

- arrears of external payments are not included in the ECOWAS convergence system;
- variation on arrears of internal payments is classified as a secondary indicator in the ECOWAS system whereas it is considered as a primary indicator in the UEMOA system.

42. Central Bank financing of budget deficit is not one of the indicators included in the UEMOA system. In the ECOWAS system however, it is classified as a primary indicator, and must not exceed 10% of the previous year's tax revenue. Member States are to comply by 2003. It should be noted, however, that a decision of the UEMOA Council of Ministers, dated September 1998, provides for the gradual reduction of statutory financing, culminating in its total abolition by 2002.

43. In the ECOWAS system, the indicator of gross reserves, equal to or higher than 6 months of imports, is classified as a primary indicator. UEMOA has not adopted this indicator. However, there is no contradiction

between the systems in this regard, since the very strict compliance with the budget deficit indicator (primary budget balance/ GDP equal to or above 0%) demanded of the UEMOA states is designed among other things, to consolidate foreign reserves.

Secondary Indicators

44. The indicators relating to wage bill / tax revenue and public investment/tax revenue are identical in both convergence systems.

45. Tax revenue / GDP - this indicator is classified as a secondary indicator in both convergence systems, although the target figures. In the ECOWAS system the target is 20% by 2003, while in the UEMOA system it is 17% by 2002. This difference is of no real importance since the figures are arbitrary, and based on the present level of fiscal imposition in most ECOWAS and UEMOA member states.

46. The indicator concerning foreign accounts is limited to UEMOA, which has set the ratio of current external deficit (excluding grants) to GDP at 5% by 2002. This criterion is not included in the ECOWAS system.

47. Real exchange rate and real interest rate are secondary indicators in ECOWAS.

48. In conclusion, the only problem that could arise from the coexistence of the two systems would be the balancing of the budget.

49. To ensure the successful coexistence of the two systems, due account must be taken of the objectives of both organisations, and the progress already achieved on the ground, particularly as concerns monetary integration. In this regard, harmonisation efforts should focus on statistics, legal matters, public accounts harmonisation of institutional arrangements, and multilateral surveillance. Harmonisation of

convergence indicators must be completed before the creation of a West African Monetary Union.

50. ECOWAS and UEMOA need to agree to harmonise the following areas of statistics:

- definition of the selected statistical aggregates for convergence indicators;
- national accounts;
- consumer prices.

51. The first working session could be scheduled for July 2000.

- b) Harmonisation status of the legal framework, accounting procedure and statistics in ECOWAS and UEMOA.

52. The UEMOA authorities have adopted Community texts in this regard, which are currently in force in all its member countries. These texts provide for the harmonisation of budgetary nomenclature and accounting plans, and the preparation of a uniform UEMOA Table of Financial Operations.

53. ECOWAS is yet to elaborate harmonised texts in this regard. The appropriate studies which are scheduled to be carried out in 2000, will take into account the progress already achieved by UEMOA. Meetings are scheduled to take place between the two organisations in the first quarter of 2001, with a view to formulating harmonised texts in this domain.

- c) Harmonisation status of the ECOWAS and UEMOA multilateral surveillance mechanisms.

54. The UEMOA multilateral surveillance mechanism for macroeconomic policy is already in existence, and is operated by the following institutions:

- the organs established for the purpose by the UEMOA Treaty, namely, the Council of Ministers and the UEMOA Commission;
- the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States)
- the National Economic Policy Committees (NEPC) created in each Member State;

55. The functions of the NEPC include:

- management of a statistical data base;
- preparation of situation reports on the evolution of the economy;
- monitoring of economic policy and transmission to the Commission and to the BCEAO of statistical data relating to specific areas;
- preparation of reports on the evolution of macroeconomic indicators.

56. The NEPCs are composed of the heads of the ministerial departments involved in the formulation of macroeconomic policy.

57. The BCEAO works together with the UEMOA Commission to ensure the compatibility of the common monetary policy with the national economic policies and especially, budgetary policy.

58. The functions of the UEMOA Commission, which is the operations centre of the multilateral surveillance mechanism, include the following:

- management of the statistical data base;
- preparation of a quarterly report on the international environment;
- preparation, for submission to the Council of Ministers, of bi-annual activity reports on the multilateral surveillance mechanism. The reports are examined in June and December of each year.

59. The economic policies of the members of the Union are coordinated by the Council.

60. The institutions are also responsible for the following:

- convergence programmes;
- modalities for their implementation;
- handling of exceptional situations.

61. In the ECOWAS system, the multilateral surveillance mechanism is operated by the following organs:

- the Convergence Council, composed of the Ministers of Finance and the Governors of Central Banks of the Member States, which carry out surveillance of macroeconomic policies and performance;
- the Monitoring Committee composed of Directors of Studies of Central Banks, and representatives of the Finance Ministry. The committee prepares bi-annual reports on the operation of the surveillance mechanism, for submission to the Convergence Council;
- the West African Monetary Agency, (WAMA) which is jointly responsible with the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, for ensuring coherence of all long-term convergence programmes elaborated by the Member States;
- National Coordinating Committees, whose function is to support the work of WAMA in collecting and processing the data provided by the Member States.

62. The ECOWAS National Coordinating Committees are not yet operational. Decisions are yet to be taken regarding the composition of the committees, their functions, and the regularity with which they are to transmit the data collected to their required destination.

63. ECOWAS and UEMOA have agreed to work out a common framework for cooperation.

d) Financing Development and Promotion of the Private Sector

64. The President of BOAD and the ECOWAS Executive Secretary and their advisors, as well as the Acting Managing Director of the ECOWAS Fund held a meeting in Abuja on 27 and 28 February 2000 to consider the feasibility of the request from the BOAD President that BOAD should be taken into account when the ECOWAS Fund is transformed into an ECOWAS Investment Bank within a holding company.

65. Both institutions recognise that this is a relevant issue at this time when the regional integration process must be reinforced so that our region may become an effective player in the world economy. It was agreed that the issue required to be studied in minute detail in order to assess the merits and disadvantages. They considered that the restructuring of the ECOWAS Fund should proceed without awaiting any such merger. BOAD duly brought this to the attention of its Council of Ministers which accepted this decision.

e) Common market

66. Every Member State was expected to have removed all taxes on approved industrial products by 1 January 2000 as stipulated in the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme. As at now, only Benin is implementing the scheme as required. Work on the ECOWAS common external tariff is at the preliminary stage involving preparation of the terms of reference of the study on CET. The Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment entered into force in June 1980. The UEMOA and ECOWAS rules of origin are virtually the same, apart from the thresholds and the modalities for computing the value-added.

67. After a convergence exercise begun in July 1998 UEMOA's common external tariff entered into force on 1 January 2000 with four rates being applied: 0%,5%, 10% and 20%.

68. The ECOWAS Secretariat and the UEMOA Commission agreed that :

- **the two institutions should hold consultations with a view to harmonising all acts relating to trade liberalisation :**
- **a schedule should be set for the harmonisation exercise;**
- **acts and study reports on the UEMOA Common External Tariff should be made available to ECOWAS;**
- **ECOWAS should be informed of ongoing UEMOA activities pertaining to free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment;**
- **terms of reference of the study on the impact of the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme on the economies and public finance of Member States should be drawn up and submitted for consideration at the forthcoming meeting.**

f) Common sectoral policies

69. The two institutions are currently moving towards developing common sectoral policies that would serve as a blueprint for programme implementation. They have therefore called for greater cooperation between ECOWAS and UEMOA, to avoid duplication of efforts.

70. It was also recommended that the two institutions should explore the possibility of organising , jointly, a donors meeting on road infrastructure. Lastly, it was agreed that there should be a regular

exchange of relevant documentation between the two institutions on projects and programmes of common interest.

- g) Modalities and timetable for implementation of envisaged measures.

71. The two institutions agreed on the following schedule:

Convergence of economic policies

- Harmonisation of statistics: first meeting in July 2000.
- Institutional arrangements: first meeting in September 2000.
- Harmonisation of legal framework, accounting procedure and public finance statistics: first meeting in the first quarter of 2001.

Common market

- Meeting to reconcile the findings of survey of the ECOWAS and UEMOA trade liberalisation schemes: 3-7 April 2000.
- Preparation of draft harmonised texts by two experts, one from each organisation: April 2000.
- ECOWAS-UEMOA experts meeting to consider the harmonised texts: 8 -12 May 2000.

2. Establishment of a second monetary zone

72. Following the adoption of the fast track approach by the twenty-second summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held in Lome on 9 and 10 December 1999, Ghana and Nigeria met in Accra on 19 and 20 December 1999 to discuss the creation, by 2003, of a second monetary zone which will be merged with UEMOA's CFA franc to form the

single ECOWAS monetary zone. The following institutional arrangements were set up:

- a Convergence Council composed of Ministers of Finance and Governors of Central Banks with responsibility to oversee and monitor implementation of the process leading up to the creation of the second monetary zone;
- a technical committee responsible for carrying out all preparatory activities;

73. Following this initiative, the other ECOWAS Member States which are non-UEMOA members were invited to join Ghana and Nigeria within the proposed second monetary zone. At the second technical meeting held in Abuja on 25 February 2000, it was decided that an interim institution be set up to serve as the nucleus of the common Central Bank. A working group has been formed to provide technical and administrative support and to lay the preparatory groundwork for the establishment of the interim institution. The group comprises a co-ordinator and a representative from each Member State. Its assignments are as follows:

- i) to undertake any activity necessary for the establishment of the interim institution;
- ii) to facilitate harmonisation of definitions of macroeconomic concepts;
- iii) to draft all technical documents, analytical and periodic reports on macroeconomic convergence;
- iv) to prepare proposals on the institutional, administrative and legal framework required for the second monetary zone;
- v) to undertake technical preparatory activities on the exchange rate mechanism, etc...;
- vi) to propose any institutional development activity such as staff requirements, organisational structure, staff rules and regulations,

74. A mini summit of Heads of State or the duly accredited representatives of Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone was held in Accra on 20 April 2000. The meeting, presided by His Excellency President Alpha Oumar Konare, the ECOWAS Chairman, considered the practical modalities for the establishment of a second monetary zone. The participants issued a solemn declaration by which they undertook to take every necessary measure to ensure that this second monetary zone becomes a reality. The meeting adopted a programme of action in this regard.

3. Creation of a borderless ECOWAS

75. At the invitation of His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a mini summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government was held in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 27 March 2000, within the context of accelerating the regional integration process in West Africa. It was attended by seven Member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. At the end of their discussions on the issues raised in the report of the preparatory ministerial meeting, the Heads of State and Government adopted the following programme of action:

- a) Free movement of persons
 - i) elimination of rigid border formalities and modernisation of border procedures through the use of passport-reading machines.
 - ii immigration officials to be instructed to accord the maximum 90-day period of stay to ECOWAS citizens at entry points by 15 April 2000;
 - iii) limiting the personnel at border posts to essential staff such as customs and immigration;

- iv) Member States yet to ratify Convention A/P1/8/94 on extradition signed in Abuja on 6 August 1994 to do so without delay;
- v) removal of the numerous road blocks and security checkpoints on international highways to reduce delays, harassment and extortion;
- vi) abolition of the residence permit requirement for each others' citizens in the spirit of equal treatment of Community citizens;
- vii) joint border patrols by neighbouring States, in this particular instance: Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali, to monitor and police national borders;
- viii) closer collaboration between the police and internal security agencies with regard to exchange of information, staff exchange programmes, and organisation of frequent coordination meetings, training courses etc.;
- ix) mounting of intensive enlightenment campaign for immigration officials;
 - x) issue and effective use of the ECOWAS Travel Certificate;
 - xi) adoption and introduction of a single ECOWAS passport;
 - xii) adoption and introduction of a multi-country, Shengen-type visa;
 - xiii) immigration officers to meet to discuss implementation of the fast-track programme.
- b) Free trade zone

76. The following measures will need to be taken towards the effective establishment of a free trade area:

- i) a list of industrial products to be published and made available at all customs entry points;

- ii) directives to be given by the Ministries of Finance to customs services to apply the 0% rate of duty on approved industrial products as well as unprocessed goods and traditional handicrafts;
 - iii) exemption from the certificate of origin requirement for raw, agricultural products of Community origin such as roots and tubers, cereals, vegetables, and livestock;
 - iv) customs officials to meet by 20 April 2000 to determine the documents that should be produced for goods valued at \$500 or below;
 - v) Ministries of Finance to issue directives by 15 April 2000 to the customs services to apply the Community Levy of 0.5% and to remit the proceeds to the ECOWAS Secretariat account with the central banks;
 - vi) conduct an intensive awareness programme on the free trade zone to educate exporters, importers, customs officials and relevant agencies;
 - vii) immediate application of the Inter-State Road Transit (ISRT) Convention;
 - viii) ECOWAS common external tariff to be adopted for entry into effect on 1st January 2001.
- c) Compensation mechanism for loss of customs revenue.

77. In order to facilitate intra-Community trade liberalisation, it will be necessary to set up a reliable compensation mechanism for loss of customs revenue. The existence of such an arrangement will guarantee

the effective participation of all the Member States in the trade liberalisation scheme. The following measures should be taken in this regard:

- i) immediate application by all Member States, of the provisions of the full regime stipulated by the protocol on the Community levy, which will transform the compensatory funds into a solidarity fund accessible to all member countries, regardless of the level of their contributions to the compensation budget or the loss of revenue incurred by them;
- ii) payment of the proceeds of the levy, by the stipulated deadline, into the central bank accounts opened by the Executive Secretariat for the purpose.

78. Heads of State and Government expressed satisfaction at the lowering of import duties in most of the Member States. They urged those states which have not already done so to lower their customs tariffs without delay, to the lowest level applied in the Member States. The measure is designed to reduce the amount of the loss to be compensated.

- e) Procedure for approval of industrial products to benefit from the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme

79. The existing procedure for approval of industrial products having been identified as an impediment to intra-regional trade, Heads of State and Government directed the Executive Secretariat to study the matter and identify ways of simplifying it.

f) Regional infrastructural development**Transport**

- i) Lagos-Cotonou-Lomé-Accra and Lagos-Niamey-Ouagadougou railway-link: a feasibility study to establish technical, economic and financial viability of the proposed rail link to be undertaken based on the standard gauge by a consultancy company, within six months. There is to be an active resource mobilisation campaign by the countries and the ECOWAS Secretariat for funding the feasibility studies and the construction of the rail link.**
- ii) Trans-coastal highway: action to be expedited on completion of the remaining portions. The countries are to implement the ECOWAS Road Management Initiative and national committees are to be set up within one month to monitor implementation;**
- iii) Road facilitation protocols: The National committees for monitoring the protocols to be made functional and to prepare reports on checkpoints, use of the ISRT, etc. The West African Road Transporters Union (UTRAO) is to be activated to play its role in the implementation of the ECOWAS road protocols.**

Maritime Transport

- i) specialised Port terminals to be designated for dedicated coastal shipping services;**
- ii) Member States to harmonise and update their shipping laws aimed at promoting the liberalisation of maritime services between the countries;**

- iii) the maritime agencies of the countries to form themselves into a committee and to meet within three months to examine the studies and other issues relating to the establishment of the coastal shipping line(s).

Energy

- i) electricity grid interconnection master plan: an accelerated approach to be adopted to implement the 330 KV interconnection between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria as well as with all the other countries.
- ii) in the drive to mobilise resources, new mechanisms of funding such as the build-own and operate (BOO) and the build-own and transfer (BOT) techniques are to be envisaged.
- iii) West African Power Pool: The inaugural meetings of the Committee of Ministers of Energy and the Inter-Utility Project Development Committee are to be convened by the ECOWAS Secretariat. The Ministers of Energy have decided to meet regularly to review progress of implementation.

Aviation

- i) The countries to liberalise the Bilateral Air Service Agreement (BASA) between them so that the entire regional territory can be covered;
- ii) the establishment of regional private airlines is to be guided by the safety rules and regulations and other requirements of the aviation industry.
- iii) enhancement of regional cooperation in air transport within the spirit of the Yamoussoukro Agreement which involves the

liberalisation of air space with respect to passenger and cargo services.

- f) Promotion of the private sector**
 - i) harmonisation of investment laws and incentives;**
 - ii) provision of investment guarantees and ratification of investment promotion and protection agreements;**
 - iii) liberalisation of agricultural/mining sectors;**
 - iv) promotion of joint projects and cross-border investments;**
 - v) enhancing the regional capital market - strengthening stock exchanges;**
 - vi) restructuring of development banks;**
 - vii) development of export processing zones;**
 - viii) privatisation of public enterprises;**
 - ix) strengthening of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and promotion of private sector dialogue;**
 - x) establishment of a West African Arbitration Centre.**

80. The Executive Secretariat is working out the practical modalities of the implementation of this action programme.

II. OTHER ECOWAS SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES.
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CREATION OF AN ECOWAS STATISTICS SYSTEM.**i) Updating statistical data in Member States****- Data collection.**

81. A full evaluation of the annual data collection exercise in the Member States has been completed. The evaluation report was examined at the first meeting of a group of seven consultants drawn from the Member States, who were assigned the task of filling out questionnaires based on the information collected. The consultants' meeting was held from 8 to 9 March 2000, at the headquarters of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat in Abuja, and during the course of the meeting, the issues of the administrative and financial management of the data collection system were debated at great length. The content and presentation of the questionnaires also came under scrutiny, in the light of the different experiences acquired.

82. The recommendations of the consultants' group included :

- i) the holding of consultants' meetings at two-year intervals, to evaluate the data collection system and its goals;**
- ii) the extension of the deadline for the completion of questionnaires from 45 days to 60 days, between June and August;**
- iii) the transmission of documents from the consultants to the Executive Secretariat using the channels deemed most appropriate by them. The ECOWAS National Units are to be used as a last resort;**

- iv) the adoption of EXCEL software as the standard equipment for data storage on diskette.

83. The results of the consultants' meeting will also serve as guidelines for the on-going review of questionnaires. Consultants are in the process of being recruited for the 2000-2001 data collection exercise. Directors of Offices of Statistics have been requested to submit nominations in this regard.

- Data processing and publications.

84. External trade figures and national accounts for the 1999 financial year have been published. The texts of the publications on social and economic indicators are being finalised prior to publication, while work has begun on the preparation of the publications in these three areas for the year 2000. An ECOWAS statistical bulletin is scheduled to be launched this year. Its function is to interlink and supply information to the Member States, in addition to serving as the ECOWAS statistical directory, and a medium for the publication of selected research findings on the integration process. Terms of reference have already been drawn up for the bulletin, and a consultant is being selected to execute the project.

85. In addition to these standard publications, an internal statistical bulletin has been prepared and circulated to the professional staff of the Executive Secretariat. Comments were invited from these staff members, and their submissions are being analysed. Most of these comments, particularly those relating to their statistical needs, can readily be accommodated within the context of the normal statistics publications; many others will be taken into account during the on-going review of the annual questionnaires, while the rest will be the subject of special studies to be carried out at a later date. The first issue of the bulletin is in the final stages of preparation.

ii) Harmonisation of national statistics.

86. The meetings of the ad hoc committees on the harmonisation of national accounts and price indices which were originally scheduled for April and May 2000, have had to be postponed. This is in order to incorporate them into the framework technical assistance programme for statistics of the European Union, which will shortly publish its financing agreement.

iii) Statistical cooperation and policy.

87. The sixth meeting of Directors of Statistics is scheduled for September 2000. The meeting will examine the reports of the two ad hoc committees on national accounts and price indices, with a special focus on the proposed implementation strategy for the initial phase of the European Union's assistance programme for statistics, which is expected to commence at the beginning of May 2000.

88. It is being proposed that Afristat should be involved in the implementation of the European Union programme because of its experience in the harmonisation of statistical tools. The institution will be invited to the forthcoming meetings of the ad hoc committee and of Directors of Statistics.

89. A response is still being expected from the World Bank with regard to the Executive Secretariat's application for funding for the Live Data Bank project. Cooperation with the ECA will be pursued, particularly with regard to the preparation of a new CASD framework.

TRANSPORT COOPERATION PROGRAMME.**i) Interconnection of railway networks.**

90. A meeting on the interconnection of railway networks was organised from 22 to 25 February 2000 by the Executive Secretariat in collaboration with the ECA and the Union of African Railways Union. A strategy and plan of action were drawn up during the meeting which reflected the decisions of the Heads of State at the mini summit on the ECOWAS borderless zone. The Executive Secretariat has submitted a funding request to the ADB for the feasibility studies on the interconnection of the railway networks.

ii) Air transport.

91. A meeting of the promoters of the ECOAIR project, ECOBANK and ECOWAS was held in Bamako on 2 April 2000, under the chairmanship of President Alpha Oumar Konare, current Chairman of ECOWAS. The technical committee which was set up at that Bamako meeting will harmonise the different implementation strategies for the project. In addition, a meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Civil Aviation will be held before the end of the year, to mobilise the support of Member States for the project.

92. In compliance with the decision of the Ministers of Civil Aviation to gradually liberalise air transport, an aviation unit will soon be set up at the ECOWAS Secretariat. A meeting is being planned between the ECA, the World Bank and the ECOWAS Secretariat, to work out the modalities, and to define the support to be accorded to Member States in order to accelerate the liberalisation process.

COOPERATION IN THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR.**i) Feasibility study on the INTELCOM II programme**

93. Work on the feasibility studies on INTELCOM II commenced in January 2000. Four experts from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria were recruited for this purpose. Their assignment was to conduct the pre-feasibility studies on the programme.

94. The second joint ECOWAS-ITU meeting, expanded to include experts from the Member States, was held in Dakar, from 17 to 20 January 2000. The meeting prepared data collection questionnaires for use by experts from the Member States, as well as an outline of the pre-feasibility report. It also endorsed the duties set out in the terms of reference.

95. The third joint ECOWAS-ITU meeting was held in Lome, from 14 to 28 February 2000, at the conclusion of the missions conducted by experts to the Member States. The meeting examined and analysed the information derived from the questionnaires, and prepared the draft report of the pre-feasibility studies. It also analysed the impact of some of the major infrastructural projects such as the West African submarine cable and the RASCOM solution, on the INTELCOM II programme. ITU is expected to forward the final report of the pre-feasibility studies to ECOWAS in May 2000. The following actions will need to be carried out to complete the remaining phases of the programme:

- i) organisation of the fourth joint ECOWAS-ITU meeting, scheduled for June 2000, to present and adopt the final report of the pre-feasibility study;**
- ii) recruitment of international experts to conduct the technical and economic studies on the INTELCOM II programme, scheduled for July 2000;**

- iii) submission of the final report of the feasibility studies on the INTELCOM II programme in December 2000.

COOPERATION IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

- i) **Establishment of a West African Power Pool**

96. The Executive Secretariat was mandated by the ECOWAS authorities to set up an institutional framework for the development of electrical energy exchange in West Africa known as the "West African Power Pool". The Secretariat received assistance in the execution of this assignment from Purdue University, USA. The project aims to set up a reliable energy data base, and prepare a model for forecasting power supply and demand, which will provide decision-makers of the region with a necessary tool for the planned development of energy infrastructures in West Africa.

97. Three regional consultants were selected to work with Purdue University for this exercise. A working and briefing session was organised in Accra from 22 to 24 March, to familiarise the regional consultants with the data collection methods required for the preparation of the forecasting model. The data collection programme is due to commence in early May 2000.

98. An Executive Secretary mission visited the World Bank in Washington from 15 to 17 March 2000, to present ECOWAS energy programme, and secure the participation of the Bank in its implementation. At the conclusion of the mission, it was agreed to convene a coordinating meeting of all the donors interested in supporting the ECOWAS energy programme. The meeting is scheduled to take place at the ADB headquarters in Abidjan, on 2 and 3 June 2000. The participants will include the ADB, the World Bank, USAID, the European Union and the UNDP, and they will be expected to harmonise actions and assign functions to the different partners.

99. A series of meetings were held between ECOWAS and the USAID regional programme at its base in Bamako. During these working sessions, a draft memorandum of understanding on energy matters was prepared which focuses on technical assistance and capacity building within the framework of the West African power pool. A funding request for approximately 1.6 million US dollars has been submitted to USAID in this regard.

ii **Master plan for the interconnection of electricity grids**

100. Within the context of the Ghana / Nigeria Initiative, the Secretariat organised a meeting of Ministers of Mines and Power of the two countries in Abuja, on 9 and 10 March 2000. At the conclusion of the meeting, the following significant decisions were reached with regard to the acceleration of the ECOWAS energy programme:

- a fast-track approach should be adopted for the implementation of the projects identified in the master plan adopted by the ECOWAS authorities, starting with the construction of a 330 kv line linking Nigeria and Ghana via Benin and Togo. This link will complete a loop enclosing 7 of the countries of the region, namely, Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Access to the 330 kv link will be free, in line with the objectives of the West African power pool;
- a working group of technicians will soon be set up to coordinate activities relating to the construction of the 330 kva line;
- the Executive Secretariat should act immediately to convene inaugural meetings of the ministerial committee on energy and of Managing Directors of electric power companies, in

accordance with Decision A/DEC.5/12/99 of the Authority of Heads of State and Government taken on 10 December 1999 in Lome,

- a solid partnership should be established between the public and the private operators in the energy sector.

iii) West African gas pipeline project.

101. Under the auspices of the Executive Secretariat, an intergovernmental agreement was signed in Abuja, on 4 February 2000, on the supply and transmission of natural gas between Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana. The agreement constitutes the legal basis demanded by the project developer prior to launching the critical phase of the detailed studies on the establishment of the structures of the West African Gas Company and the mobilisation of funds to finance the project.

102. The Secretariat has also commenced the implementation of the USAID technical assistance programme for the project which involves training and capacity building. The training and logistic requirements of the four countries have been assessed and programmed. Two training workshops have already been held, from 3 to 7 April 2000 in Ghana, and from 17 to 19 April 2000 in Togo. Two meetings of the Project Implementation Committee have been held in Benin and Ghana respectively, while a consultative workshop was organised by the project developer in Paris from 14 to 17 March 2000.

103. A series of meetings and workshops have been scheduled for the second quarter of 2000. These include a meeting of the Project Implementation Committee, which will be held on 28 May 2000, to examine and adopt the terms of the concession agreement. Workshops will be organised to address issues such as project financing, tax, customs duties, pipeline technology, contractual obligations, tariffs and

institutions. These workshops will all contribute to capacity building in the four Member States involved in the pipeline project and help find solutions to the multiple problems connected with the implementation of the trans-border pipeline project. Exercises will also be organised to assess the ability of the experts to conduct negotiations and process the dossiers they will be called upon to handle.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME.

i) Floating weed control programme.

104. The Council of Ministers, in accordance with Regulation C/REG.2/8/99 relating to the award of the contract for the conduct of the supplementary study on the control of floating weeds, mandated the Executive Secretariat to open negotiations with the firm Ramboll, which submitted the winning tender.

105. The submissions of the first three firms were forwarded to the ADB which was requested to comment and approve the results of the tenders evaluation. The ADB has initiated a review of the tenders evaluation, but the Secretariat has not been informed of the results of this exercise. Indeed, no response has been received from the ADB despite repeated reminders from the Secretariat.

106. The proposed supplementary study is yet to be carried out. It is necessary to maintain contact with the ADB, in order to ascertain the conditions attached to its agreement, and to the release of funds for the conduct of the study.

107. Initiatives will be made to secure from the GEF, IDB and UNEP/GEF, the required funds for the implementation of all the regional projects identified in the 1995 feasibility study.

ii) Desertification control programme.

108. By Decision A/DEC.1/12/99, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted a sub-regional action programme (SRAP) to combat desertification in West Africa. The Executive Secretariat and CILSS were mandated to negotiate funding for the programme with development partners. To this end, ECOWAS and CILSS held a consultative meeting in Abuja on 7 April 2000 to assess the implementation status of the SRAP, and to plan the 2000 activities. It was agreed that priority should be given to the formulation of guidelines for regional projects covering three areas of activity, namely: shared water resources; agricultural and livestock resources and energy resources. ECOWAS and CILSS are to seek the support of development partners such as UNEP, the GEF and UNSO. The following activities are also envisaged:

- convening of a meeting of the regional coordinating committee for the SRAP, to endorse the identified projects;
- representation of West Africa at the 4th conference of parties to the convention on desertification control which will be held in Australia;
- involvement of West Africa in the preparations for Earth Summit II which will be held in 2002, with a view to assessing the implementation status of Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference;
- sensitisation of donors by the Heads of ECOWAS and CILSS and mobilisation of funds for implementation of the SRAP.

iii) Water resource management.

109. ECOWAS is active in sub-regional water resource management programmes. These include :

a) **The integrated development programme for the Fouta Jallon Highlands.**

110. The ministerial conference on this integrated development programme was held in Bamako in 1999 and recommended that a global study should be conducted on the project, taking into account the international character of the Fouta Jallon range, and the need to adopt a sustainable natural resource management strategy compatible with the regional programmes of the states bordering the mountain range.

111. A workshop was organised in March 2000, at Labe, in Guinea, to formulate terms of reference for the study. The workshop was attended by the countries bordering the Fouta Jallon; the river basin organisations, namely, the OMVS, the OMVG, the Mano River Union and the Niger Basin Authority; and by development partners: the FAO, UNEP, GEF, UNEP/GEF, and the European Union.

112. The ministerial conference also requested its chairman, the Minister of the Environment of Mali, to collaborate with ECOWAS and the OAU, in mobilising funds for the study.

113. It is envisaged that a meeting will be held in Conakry, involving the OAU, ECOWAS, the Chairman of the ECOWAS ministerial conference, and the coordinating bureau of the programme. It will address issues relating to the transfer of the programme to ECOWAS, and mobilisation of funds.

b) **Follow-up on the recommendations of the ministerial conference on integrated water resource management.**

114. The West African ministerial conference on integrated water resource management which was held in Ouagadougou in 1998, made the following recommendations :

- introduction of an integrated water resource management policy;
- creation of a regional cooperation framework for integrated water resource management;
- creation or reactivation of consultative fora for joint management.

115. In order to implement these recommendations, Burkina Faso was requested to serve as the interim secretariat of the monitoring committee of the ministerial conference. A series of meetings has subsequently been organised to address the issues raised. Similarly, a world-wide movement in favour of water resource management generated other regional initiatives which are in complete harmony with the formulation of a regional plan of action, particularly the synergy between the world vision of water resources and the West African. A consultative technical committee was set up for West Africa, with ECOWAS as a member. A regional plan of action on integrated water resource management was formulated and adopted by the Ouagadougou ministerial conference which was held on 2 and 3 March 2000.

116. At the conclusion of its meeting, the conference recommended that ECOWAS should act as coordinator for the plan, and should set up an office for it within the Executive Secretariat. All these measures are consistent with the sub-regional action programme adopted by the ECOWAS authorities. Steps will be taken to present proposals for the internalisation of the sub-regional action plan for integrated water resource management. This will serve to encourage synergy between the measures recommended by the conference and the sub-regional action plan which is a mechanism for the rationalisation of individual actions to ensure sustainable water resource development.

iv) Meteorological project development.

117. The regional meteorological programme was reviewed to take into account the conclusions of the Rio Convention on climatic change and desertification control, thereby enhancing complementarity and synergy. The meteorological project documents were prepared by two consultants with funds from the WMO.

118. The IDB, GEF, UNDP UNEP/GEF and ADB have been approached with a view to obtaining funding for the project. The European Union is willing to finance the METEOSAT project designed to enhance the use of meteorological satellites. Negotiations have begun in connection with the signing of a funding agreement with the European Union and the procurement of equipment for national meteorological services and sub-regional centres (ARCEDEM and AGRYHMET)

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

119. The ad hoc committee on the cultural development programme has held its first meeting convened essentially to consider plans for the proposed organisation of an ECOWAS Arts Festival.

120. The festival is part of efforts being made to encourage cooperation among Member States in the area of culture and tourism.

121. The festival has as its objectives:

- to harmonise cultural policies and to establish regular cooperation which will ensure that the necessary attention is paid to the cultural dimension of regional integration for development.

- to encourage creativity, develop cultural tourism, free movement of cultural goods, promote trade and give African artistes greater access to international art markets.

122. Suggestions of a name made by the ad hoc committee for the festival are:

- i) **WAF'ARTS (West African Festival and Arts)**
- ii) **ECOFEST (ECOWAS Festival)**

123. The ad hoc committee has suggested that the theme of this maiden edition of the ECOWAS festival should be "Culture and Integration".

124. The following disciplines have been chosen:

- i) **Performing arts: theatre, music, dance, ballet, choreography, story-telling**
- ii) **plastic arts: cinema, fashion, bazaar (handicraft, cultural industries, gastronomy, games)**
- iii) **demonstrations by traditional praise singer.**

125. The ad hoc committee has also agreed on a strategy and adopted modalities for the implementation of a cultural development programme.

COOPERATION IN EDUCATION MATTERS

126. ECOWAS and OAU organised in Banjul, from 24 to 28 January 2000, the first regional seminar on the Decade for Education in Africa. The meeting sought to provide a forum for information exchange on the Education Decade, to explore ways and means of successfully implementing certain identified priority activities in the action programme, propose possible pilot projects, and strengthen cooperation initiatives and coordination mechanisms.

127. Apart from the national programmes which each Member State will undertake, 10 regional joint projects have been selected for implementation in connection with the Decade. Coordination of these activities has been assigned to countries or institutions as follows:

- i) Development of science, technology and professional training in West Africa - Nigeria (Team leader).**
- ii) Promoting the production and distribution of school textbooks and teaching materials - Senegal (Team leader).**
- iii) Research education, evaluation and strengthening of the documentation base in West Africa - Ghana (team leader)**
- iv) Communication to promote education in West Africa - Benin (Team leader)**
- v) Educating women and young girls in West Africa - WAWA (Team leader)**
- vi) Literacy and teaching in national languages in West Africa - Mali (Team leader)**
- vii) Education for the emergence of a peace culture in West Africa - Sierra Leone and Liberia with UNESCO assistance (Team leader)**
- viii) Developing teaching programmes for the earliest years in West Africa - Senegal and Liberia (Team leaders)**
- ix) Education for promotion of regional integration in West Africa - (Guinea and Ghana, in cooperation with ECOWAS and OAU)**
- x) Education for acquiring survival skills - Senegal and Ghana in cooperation with UNESCO.**

128. A monitoring committee was set up comprising 5 Member States and 11 international organisations (NGOs and IGOs) that took part in the seminar. The committee, charged mainly with finalising the project profiles, plans to hold its first meeting in Dakar during the World Conference on Education. The seminar recommended, inter alia, that:

- more staff should be recruited for the secretariat of the Decade at the headquarters
- ECOWAS should organise a meeting of Ministers of Education, Finance, Planning and Integration before the end of the year.

COOPERATION IN HEALTH MATTERS

129. ECOWAS Ministers of Health met in Abuja, on 4 April 2000, during the African summit on malaria to exchange views on a regional health strategy. They stressed the crucial importance of the health sector for the socio-economic development of West African States, and resolved to draw up a programme of action that will be based on the outcome of the African summit on malaria, the fight against AIDS, and research findings in this area.

COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF INFORMATION

vi) ECOWAS Anthem

130. The ECOWAS Anthem was played to the Heads of State during their last summit in Lome from 9 to 10 December 1999. The Authority thereafter recommended that the music be recorded on cassettes and sent to all Member States for review by experts. After consultations at the highest level, the anthem has been approved. It will officially be played during the 25th anniversary on 28 May 2000 at Abuja.

ii ECOWAS 25th Anniversary celebrations

131. The following activities have been planned to mark the 25th anniversary of ECOWAS:

- **An extraordinary Summit of Heads of State which will be devoted to discussions on a vision of integration for West Africa within the context of the proposal to establish the African union**
- **publication of a brochure "25th Anniversary Special" detailing the objectives, fundamental principles, achievements and prospects;**
- **production of a radio and television programme taking stock of ECOWAS after 25 years of existence**
- **production of publicity items to commemorate the 25th anniversary.**

INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

132. The Executive Secretariat attended the second meeting of West African parliamentarians which took place in Ouagadougou from 28 to 31 March 2000. Great emphasis was laid on the need to expedite action on the establishment of the ECOWAS Parliament as this will facilitate enforcement of Community decisions. A call was made to all Member States which have not ratified the protocol on the Community Parliament to do so without delay. The Secretariat was requested to organise a workshop on modalities for the establishment of the Parliament, based on the experience of the European union.

COOPERATION WITH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**i) Organisation of African Unity/ African Economic Community**

133. The OAU/PASU support unit charged with providing support to regional economic communities has made available 119,500 US dollars to the ECOWAS executive Secretariat for the studies on free movement of persons, evaluation of macroeconomic convergence, and elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade.

ii) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

134. The Secretariat has been working closely with the ECA's sub-regional Development Centre (SRDC - Niamey) on the preparation of a report on social and economic conditions in West Africa. The report will be presented and discussed at an experts meeting scheduled for Abuja from 2 to 5 June 2000.

iii) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

135. The Executive Secretary has signed a funding agreement for 100,000 US dollars with UNDP (Guerrero Fund). The money is to be used for activities in connection with the harmonisation of the legal framework, accounting procedure and statistical framework of public finances of ECOWAS Member States. Preparation of the studies will commence once the funds are released to the Secretariat.

136. The UNDP has also signed a partnership agreement with the Secretariat for the planned preparation of a detailed study on human development in West Africa.

iv) Provision of European Union institutional support to ECOWAS

137. A short-term consultant was recruited to carry out an evaluation of present capacity of our institution and prepare a project document for enhancing such capacity. The consultant submitted an initial report in February 2000 which ECOWAS has studied and commented upon.

138. On completion of this study, a consultant who specialises in integration matters will be recruited on a long-term contract (3 to 4 years). The consultant will assist to implement the regional integration support programmes (RISP) and to elaborate a common external tariff for ECOWAS. The European Union is also expected to make available 1.9 million euro for financing the regional Mechanism for Conflict Prevention.

v) ACP Group

139. Consultations have been going on between ECOWAS countries, aimed at coordinating measures taken by West African countries, and strengthening regional unity within the ACP Group.

140. ECOWAS is also increasing cooperation with the ACP Group General Secretariat. The ECOWAS Legal Department is currently finalising the text of a cooperation framework agreement drafted by the ACP Secretariat.

vi) Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

141. A fact-finding team from the Foundation was at the Executive Secretariat for three weeks (1 - 21 April 2000), on an evaluation mission connected with the proposed assistance of two million dollars which will be used to boost the capacity of West African countries in multilateral trade negotiations. The project document emanating from this evaluation will be submitted to the governing council of the Foundation for its approval.

vii) World Bank

142. The World Bank and the Executive Secretariat have begun discussions on defining a strategy for regional assistance to West Africa. In the course of two meetings so far held in Abuja in February, and in Washington in March, the two parties prepared the broad outline of an action plan that will ensure that Member States and the Bretton Woods institutions reflect the regional dimension of development in the national economic policies adopted. The Bank is finalising the strategy and it will be considered by its Executive Directors when finished. If adopted, the new approach will greatly enhance the integration process in West Africa.

III - ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ISSUES**i) Construction of staff residences**

143. The ad hoc ministerial committee on the construction of headquarters met in Abuja from 5 to 7 April 2000 to review the progress of work on the construction of residences for Secretariat staff.

144. Citing reasons outside its control, the contracting firm has requested that the handover date be shifted from 16 May 2000 to 8 July 2000. Also, work is yet to begin on the provision of necessary infrastructures in the Katampe area of the Federal capital: roads, water supply, electricity, drainage.

145. During a courtesy call on the Minister of the Federal Capital, the members of the sub-committee were given every assurance that all the necessary infrastructures would be put in place to make the area habitable.

ii) **Financial resources of the Executive Secretariat**

146. As at 31 March 2000, the total amount owed as arrears of financial contributions to the Executive Secretariat budget was 46.23 million dollars made up as follows:

Liberia	20 years arrears	(US\$11.1 million)
Mauritania	16 years	(US\$6 million)
Gambia	11 years	(US\$2.65 million)
Sierra Leone	11 years	(US\$3.5 million)
Cape Verde	10 years	(US\$2.13 million)
Guinea Bissau	10 years	(US\$2.5 million)
Niger	7 years	(US\$2.2 million)
Guinea	5 years	(US\$2.05 million)
Senegal	4 years	(US\$1.25 million)
Ghana	2 years	(US\$1.97 million)
Cote d'Ivoire	2 years	(US\$1.2 million)
Togo	2 years	(US\$962,360)

147. Only Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria have no other arrears apart from their dues for the current budget (2000). It is also worth mentioning that the Republic of Senegal has consistently striven to reduce the amount of its arrears.

148. The hopes pinned on the Community levy as the panacea to the problem of irregular payment of contributions have failed to materialise. Some Member States that apply the levy, which entered into force on 1 January 2000, do not remit the proceeds to the Executive Secretariat to offset their arrears. This attitude undermines the credibility of our organisation. All Member States must show greater political will to move the regional integration process forward by paying their contributions to the budgets of the Community institutions.

IV REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

149. A major outcome of the last summit of Heads of State and Government was the adoption of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace keeping and Security.

150. The ECOWAS protocol on the mechanism, the only one of its kind, seeks to provide measures that would prevent, manage and resolve domestic and inter-state conflicts, through the strengthening of cooperation in areas of conflict prevention, provision of an early warning system, control of cross border crime and a host of other security-related initiatives. Basically, the overriding principle behind the Protocol is the promotion and consolidation of democratic governments and institutions in all Member States of the Community.

151. It was therefore with much dismay that the Community received the news of the coup d'état in Cote d'Ivoire in December 1999, barely two weeks after the unanimous adoption of this ECOWAS Protocol and also considering the fact that Cote d'Ivoire is a Member State that is known for its strict adherence to democratic principles.

Côte d'Ivoire

152. With the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, the Community had no choice but to commence the immediate implementation of the Protocol on the Mechanism by convening on 29th December 1999 the first meeting of the Mediation and Security Council; the institution established under the Protocol to take decisions on issues of peace and security within the region on behalf of the Authority.

153. The meeting was convened to recommend appropriate measures on the prevailing political, security and economic situation in Cote d'Ivoire and its impact on the sub-region.

154. The meeting strongly condemned the military coup in Côte d'Ivoire and demanded the new administration in Côte d'Ivoire, known as the National Salvation Council and headed by General Robert GUEI, to establish among other things, a transitional government by June 2000, which would organise free and fair general and presidential elections and restore democratic rule in Côte d'Ivoire.

155. Necessary contacts were made with the new authorities to convey the decision of the Mediation and Security Council. By its second meeting held in Bamako on 29 January 2000, reports reached the Council to the effect that the National Salvation Council of Côte d'Ivoire intended to conduct democratic elections by October 2000 contrary to the recommendation of the first meeting of the Mediation and Security Council.

156. The new authorities in Côte d'Ivoire have put together a new Constitution for the country but the general view is that the transition timetable is not precise. There is also no tangible indication that the elections will take place as scheduled.

157. The Mediation and Security Council however resolved to have dialogue with the authorities in Côte d'Ivoire and consultations have continued with a view to restoring constitutional and democratic rule in Côte d'Ivoire as soon as possible.

158. The Mediation and Security Council at its third meeting, held in Monrovia on 15 March 2000, agreed on its draft rules of procedure and recommended it to the Authority for approval. This is indeed an important development because of the role the Council is to play in resolving conflict within our region. It also deliberated on the continued existence of earlier

committees set up to carry out mediation-related activities in conflict areas within the region, and recommended their dissolution in order to avoid the problem of duplication.

159. The meeting of the Mediation and Security Council at the level of Ambassadors has not been convened, because of the need to accredit Member States' Ambassadors to the Executive Secretariat. The Security Council at the Ambassadorial level is made up of Ambassadors of ECOWAS Member States accredited as permanent representatives to the Secretariat. The Mechanism itself recommends that these Council members may be Ambassadors already accredited to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In his letter to the Executive Secretariat, the Togolese Ambassador in his capacity as the Chairman of the Committee of ECOWAS Ambassadors in Nigeria, asked that the meeting be deferred to enable the Ambassadors hold necessary consultations with their governments.

160. The Mediation and Security Council will meet at the level of Heads of State and Government on the 27th May 2000 at Abuja.

Sierra Leone

161. The Mediation and Security Council had also considered the situation in Sierra Leone, and assessed the status of implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement of September 1999. It explored ways of rapidly attaining the objectives of the peace agreement. At the time of the last summit the United Nations had taken a decision to deploy UNAMSIL, the UN peace - keeping force in Sierra Leone, a move that one can say, heralded the end of ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone.

162. May I at this juncture, re-affirm the appreciation of the Community to the UN Secretary - General and the Security Council for the bold step taken towards resolving the crisis in Sierra Leone. I would like to seize this opportunity to express our deepest appreciation to our gallant soldiers of

ECOMOG who made enormous sacrifices towards the restoration of peace and stability to Sierra Leone. I feel very grateful to the troop-contributing countries namely, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Nigeria for the pivotal role they played in the conflict management and the peace-keeping efforts of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone.

163. The withdrawal of ECOMOG troops in Sierra Leone (to be completed by the end of April 2000), should not be seen as loss of interest by ECOMOG in developments in that country. Sierra Leone remains part and parcel of ECOWAS. Resolving the crisis in Sierra Leone will therefore remain high on the agenda of the Community. Member States aside from contributing to troops to UNAMSIL, must continue to be involved in resolving the problem in Sierra Leone through diplomatic and political channels. ECOWAS' continued interest therefore is demonstrated by our active participation in the activities of the Joint Implementation Committee set up under the Lomé accord.

**Joint Implementation Committee/ Lome Peace Agreement of
August 1999**

164. The Joint Implementation Committee is a body established to make appropriate recommendations to ensure effective implementation of the Lomé peace agreement. The ECOWAS Committee of Seven on Sierra Leone is a member of this body, hence through the operations of the Joint Implementation Committee, the Mediation and Security Council is able to monitor the situation in Sierra Leone.

Update of events in Sierra Leone

165. The Lome peace agreement provides for the involvement of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the political process of that country. In that regard, the RUF has since transformed itself into a political party known as the RUF Party, and is in fact a part of the government of Sierra Leone

with members of the RUF appointed into ministerial positions and serving on committees and commissions.

- Security in Sierra Leone has improved considerably with the presence of ECOMOG.
- UNAMSIL following a UN Security resolution has an expanded force of 11,100 troops as against the former 6000, who are being gradually deployed to all parts of Sierra Leone with a simultaneous withdrawal of ECOMOG.
- The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process is being pursued, albeit at a rather slow pace partly because of the rebels' ambivalent attitude towards the process and also due to inadequate funding for the establishment of suitably equipped rehabilitation centres.
- contrary to expectations, the return of Foday Sankoh, leader of the RUF and Johnny Paul Koroma of the AFRC/SLA to Sierra Leone, has not led to the rapid implementation of the peace plan for Sierra Leone.
- The situation in Sierra Leone can at best be described as fragile with reports of sporadic clashes between the RUF and the AFRC/SLA as well as reported attacks on UNAMSIL and ECOMOG.
- One should not despair though, since the authorities in Sierra Leone show their determination to restore peace and stability and move the country towards proper constitutional rule.
- The work of the constitutional review committee is nearing completion and the national electoral commission is about to be established with the completion of membership nomination.
- The Council of Elders and religious leaders whose membership includes a representative of ECOWAS, is about to be established to resolve differences in interpreting the Peace agreement.
- The draft bill for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been submitted to the Sierra Leonian parliament, therefore the establishment of the body should follow soon.

166. I should like to express our special appreciation of the ECOWAS Chairman's recent efforts at accelerating the peace process in Sierra Leone. Concerned at the implementation difficulties being encountered and in order to accelerate the peace process, the current Chairman of the Authority, President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konare convened an Ad Hoc meeting of the principal parties to the peace accord in Bamako on 2nd March 2000. I chaired a follow - up meeting of this Ad Hoc committee which was held in Freetown on 20th March 2000 to monitor the implementation of measures adopted at the 2nd March 2000 meeting for rapid restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

167. The decisions of that meeting in Freetown included the following:

- a) A strong appeal to the rebel factions in Sierra Leone to remove all obstacles to the deployment of UNAMSIL.
- b) That a commission of inquiry be set up comprising ECOMOG, UNAMSIL, RUF, AFRC/SLA and the CCP to carry out intensive investigation in order to recover the large quantity of weapons seized a few months earlier from the Guinean and Kenyan troops by rebel factions.
- c) An appeal to the ex-combatants to remove completely all road blocks mounted by their loyalists in order that UNAMSIL and other humanitarian agencies may have unhindered access to every part of Sierra Leone.
- d) That the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process be revitalised through regular meetings of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NDCDDR) where technical issues relating to logistics must be worked out. UNAMSIL was requested to provide the logistic assistance needed to enable the leaders of the ex-rebels reach their combatants and encourage them to disarm.

THE WAY FORWARD

168. It is important to remind the people of Sierra Leone, that primary responsibility rests with them for restoring normalcy, peace and stability to that country. Resolving the crisis in Sierra Leone shall continue to be the focus of our regional efforts for peace, but all our initiatives can only complement the efforts of the Sierra- Leonian people themselves.

169. I appeal to the authorities in Sierra Leone to make all commissions set up under the Lome peace agreement functional as they have important roles to play in the peace process.

170. My appeal also goes to the international community to provide adequate resources for the effective implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) programme. Furthermore, it is my sincere hope, that the burning ceremony of arms and ammunition, coming at the end of the DDR programme, will not be seen merely as a symbolic event but will truly represent total commitment on the part of every Sierra Leonian to bury the hatchet and engage in genuine reconciliation in order to maintain and sustain peace, security and stability in Sierra Leone.

171. We must not forget however, that in order to achieve lasting peace in Sierra Leone we must ensure that peace and stability reign supreme in her neighbouring states. It is in realisation of this commitment that following on the decision of the last summit, Heads of States of the Mano River Union member states met recently in Bamako.

Meeting of the Mano River Union Member States

172. At the instance of the Chairman of the Authority, consultation of the Heads of State of the Mano River Union took place on the 2nd March in Bamako and very important discussions were held on ways of strengthening the ties between the Mano River Member states, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra

Leone. The Heads of State of the three countries reiterated their will to reinstate dialogue at all levels in order to promote goodwill, neighbourliness and cooperation among themselves.

173. A subsequent meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Mano River Union was held in Monrovia on 18th March 2000 at the instance of their Heads of State to discuss ways of revitalising the Mano River Union. The Ministers adopted several strategies for this purpose, some of which are:

- i) the immediate reactivation of the Secretariat of the Mano River Union,
- ii) the institutionalisation of confidence-building, security and stability measures, and
- iii) the resumption of activities in all areas of cooperation

174. A meeting of the Ministers of Defence, Security and Internal Affairs of the Mano River Union (MRU) States was also held in Freetown on the 17 and 18 April in order to devise practical modalities for the establishment of a joint security committee to monitor and ensure the security of their common borders in line with the provisions of the Mano River Union Security Pact. The Heads of State of the Mano River Union are to meet again in Conakry on 7 and 8 May 2000 in demonstration of the three countries commitment to reestablish meaningful cooperation. ECOWAS attends the meetings as an observer and provides necessary technical and logistic support.

175. The Community naturally encourages the strengthening of collaborative ties between the three Mano River Union countries, as the peaceful co-existence of these States is vital to the attainment of peace and stability in our region.

Implementation of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution

176. I have recounted efforts made by the Secretariat to implement the ECOWAS Protocol on the mechanism through the meetings of the Mediation and Security Council, the foremost institution established by that mechanism for prevention, monitoring and management of intra and inter State conflicts.

177. As part of our effort towards the implementation of the mechanism, an inaugural meeting of the Defence and Security Commission was convened after necessary consultation with the Chairman of the Authority.

Defence and Security Commission

178. The Defence and Security Commission is one of the supporting organs established under the ECOWAS protocol on the mechanism, to assist the Mediation and Security Council in its task of peacekeeping and monitoring through the examination of all technical, administrative and logistical requirements of peace-keeping operations. The members of this commission are mainly, Chiefs of defence staff and heads of ministries responsible for internal affairs and security.

179. An inaugural meeting of the Defence and Security Commission is scheduled to be held in Accra on 10th and 11th May 2000. The meeting examined in detail, provisions of the mechanism and their implementation vis-à-vis functions of the Defence and Security Commission. They recommended for the approval of the Mediation and Security Council the immediate creation of composite stand-by units by Member States as provided under the Mechanism.

180. In trying to develop common training programmes and instruction manuals for the ECOWAS composite stand by units for use at the designated

training centres as required by the protocol, the Secretariat in collaboration with an NGO called 'Save our children' is in the process of arranging a "Training of trainers programme" for military staff of the armed forces of West African countries at Zambrako in Abidjan.

181. The programme is geared towards developing capacity for the formal training of our units on the issue of "child rights and child protection before, during and after conflict".

Council of Elders

182. In spite of the call on Member States by the Authority at the last summit to communicate the list of persons who could be appointed as members of the Council of Elders to the Secretariat by 31 January 2000, only four Member States, namely Gambia, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria heeded this call by sending in a list of their nominees.

183. Reminders were yet again despatched to Member States giving them a dead line of 30th March 2000. No further response has been received by the Secretariat, making it impossible to draw up the proposed list for the Council of Elders.

184. I therefore , now urge Member States to send in their list of names and the curricula vitae of eminent personalities possess the necessary competence for carrying out the prescribed functions.

Observation and Monitoring Centre/zones

185. As far as the observation system prescribed under the Protocol is concerned, we are in the process of setting up the system within the Secretariat and have also forwarded to the four (4) Member States where the zonal systems are to be established, copies of headquarters agreements that would enable and facilitate the setting up of these zonal systems.

186. In anticipation of the conclusion of these agreements, the Secretariat is putting in place necessary procedures for the appointment of qualified personnel to man the observation bureaux.

**Rationalisation of the Agreement on Non Aggression
and Defence (ANAD)**

187. In compliance with the various decisions of the Authority regarding the rationalisation of all IGOs within our region, an ECOWAS - ANAD meeting was held on 25 February 2000 to recommend ways and means of rationalizing ANAD activities in order to avoid any duplication with ECOWAS activities.

188. That meeting proposed two options for effecting the rationalisation namely:

- a) The conversion of ANAD into a specialised agency of ECOWAS with a specific mandate;
- b) The absorption of ANAD into the ECOWAS Secretariat.

189. The options will naturally be forwarded to the ECOWAS decision-making bodies for final decision.

**Support for the establishment and consolidation of democracy in
Member States**

190. As a means of demonstrating the Community's commitment to the ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles of 6 July 1991 on freedom, peoples rights and democratisation, the Executive Secretariat monitors as much as possible all pre and post election procedures in Member States.

- i) On the 23rd December 1999 the Secretariat witnessed the swearing in of President Tandja Mamadou of the Republic of Niger after the successful democratic elections in that country.

- ii The Secretariat also witnessed the elections in the Republic of Guinea Bissau that brought President Koumba Yala Kobde Nhanca to power in February 2000.

191. Under the leadership of President Tandja Mamadou of Niger and President Nhanca of Guinea Bissau, the economies of both countries have undergone positive transformation for the benefit and welfare of their peoples.

- iii The Secretariat was present in Senegal to monitor events concerning democratic elections which led to the election victory of President Abdoulaye Wade on 19 March 2000.

192. The elections were fair, peaceful and transparent. I believe that these elections truly represent a triumph for democracy and the Community. I enjoin all Member States facing democratic elections to emulate the example set by the Republic of Senegal.

193. I cannot but praise the conduct of the candidates who contested in the presidential elections in Senegal. The winner accepted victory with commendable modesty, while the other contestant accepted defeat with a high sense of responsibility.

194. I seize this opportunity to congratulate the new President, His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade for his resounding success and at the same time, pay tribute to former President Diouf who incidentally is one of the Head of States who signed the Revised ECOWAS Treaty. President Diouf had since played a significant role in the evolution of ECOWAS.

- iv The Secretariat through the effort of the Mediation and Security Council is closely monitoring all events in Côte d'Ivoire connected with the proposed elections of October 2000.

Implementation of the Ecowas Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacturing of Light Weapons

195. One of decisions adopted at the last summit was the establishment of an appropriate institutional framework within Member States that will further encourage their involvement in the application of the moratorium.

196. For this purpose, a call was made on Member States to establish national commissions which among other functions, shall assist the relevant government authorities in the design, elaboration and implementation of national policies on the control of the proliferation and illicit circulation of light weapons. So far, only Mali, Senegal and Niger have established national commissions whilst Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Burkina Faso at the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on 6th and 7th December 1999 at Lome, expressed their intention to establish these commissions.

197. I therefore seize this opportunity to appeal to Member States to set up commissions which would help effective implementation of the Moratorium.

198. One of the functions of the Secretariat is to process for approval, applications for exemptions under the Moratorium sent in by Member States.

199. The Secretariat in turn forwards these applications to all other Member States who are expected to approve or disapprove same.

200. I wish to appeal to Member States to kindly attend expeditiously to these notifications sent to them and forward timely responses to the Secretariat, to ensure early processing of the exemption applications.

201. The Secretariat has had to process within a period of 12 months about 9 applications from Member States, namely, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, all seeking the waiver status for importation of varying classes of small arms and hunting rifles.

**Review and Harmonisation of National Legislation
and Administrative Procedures.**

202. It may be recalled that another requirement for effective implementation of the moratorium under the ECOWAS code of conduct for its implementation, is the harmonisation of legislation and administrative procedures of Member States that relate to light weapons.

203. In preparation for the harmonisation exercise, the Secretariat had requested that member States send to it, copies of their relevant legislations and regulations. So far, only Gambia and Niger have responded to the request. May I urge all other Member States to submit such legislation as soon as possible in order to facilitate implementation of the harmonisation programme.

V) INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Withdrawal of Mauritania from ECOWAS

204. The Executive Secretariat on the 26 December 1999 received from Mauritania, a letter of withdrawal of its membership from the Economic Community of West African States.

205. In response to that withdrawal letter, the Secretariat informed Mauritania that under the terms of Article 91 of the Revised Treaty, a Member State wishing to withdraw from the Community is bound by the following:

206. To give one year's notice to the Executive Secretary who shall inform the other Member States accordingly, and that the withdrawal becomes final and complete where the notice is not withdrawn, within that one year period.

207. That the Member State concerned shall, within that one year period, continue to comply with the provisions of the Treaty and remains bound to discharge its obligations under the Treaty.

208. Letters were written by the Secretariat to all other Member States informing them of this development. By the provision of the Treaty therefore, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is expected to fulfil all its obligations and in particular, its financial obligation to the Community. I have received no acknowledgement to my letter from Mauritania.

Community Court of Justice

209. In compliance with the directives given to the Executive Secretariat at the last Summit of the Authority of Heads of States and Government, to take necessary measures to appoint the judges for the Court of Justice in accordance, with the provisions of the ECOWAS Treaty, the Secretariat sent out letters to Member States requesting for nominees out of which the Council of Ministers will make recommendations for the selection and appointment by the Authority, of the Judges of the court. The Secretariat awaits the response of the Member States.

Community Parliament

210. It is important to note that the Protocol on the Community Parliament has not entered into force since there are only eight ratifications to this Protocol instead of at least nine as prescribed under the ECOWAS Treaty.

211. Member States who have ratified the Protocol are Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

212. At a recent meeting of the West African Speakers which took place from 28th to 31st March 2000, attended by a representative of the Secretariat, it was reported that the Republic of Niger is about to ratify the protocol on the parliament.

213. I seize this opportunity to call on the Republic of Niger and all other Member States that have not done so, to ratify the Protocol in order that the Parliament be established as envisaged under the Treaty.

Appeal to the European Union

214. As a follow-up to the Resolution A/RES.4/8/99 adopted by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on 10 December 1999, on the lifting of sanctions on the Togolese Republic, relevant letters have been despatched to the Council of Ministers of the European Union and the Commissioner for Development (DGVIII) of the European Union forwarding the text of the Heads of State Resolution and making a strong appeal for the renewal of European Union cooperation ties in all sectors of the Togolese Republic.

215. The appeal was of course made in the light of the devastating effects of the sanctions on the lives of Togolese citizens in terms of increased poverty as well as the down turn of its economy resulting in high inflation rates and massive unemployment. The Secretariat is still waiting for a response from the European Union.

C O N C L U S I O N

216. The need to intensify the pace of integration of national economies is becoming more glaring in West Africa . However, in reviewing the integration process, we must not only decide whether it is necessary or desirable, but we must also determine which priorities come first and what operational strategies we should adopt. All this implies having a broader vision of regional integration, anchored on the long term construction of our Community.

217. Our immediate priority should be to bring about better regional coordination of national economic and financial policies. This has already begun within the framework of ECOWAS and UEMOA cooperation arrangements. Further efforts are required to be able to harmonise the activities of the two organisations, primarily as regards the decisions taken by the Bamako ministerial meeting concerning macroeconomic convergence, trade liberalisation, and a common external tariff. Donors and international institutions have an important catalytic role to play in this regard, by increasing external support for measures taken at regional level, and by encouraging greater collaboration.

218. The second priority will be to continue with the fast track approach recommended by the Summit of Heads of State and Government in Lome in December 1999. The monetary cooperation programme is obviously a key area within this new strategy, and it offers distinct comparative advantages for the success of the gradual approach to integration. ECOWAS countries which are non-members of UEMOA have committed to establish a second monetary zone by 2003, which they expect will merge with the UEMOA zone in 2004 to create a single ECOWAS currency.

219. Given the geographical, cultural and economic realities on the ground, it is inevitable that there will be several coexisting regional integration

options and strategies. What is needed however is one flexible, pragmatic strategy, comprising many segments and based on the quest for mutual advantages in different areas. The process of Community building therefore requires that we harness our efforts and direct them towards areas where they will have the most positive long-term effect.

220. The integration process in West Africa has so far been such that attention has been focused on the choice of the institutions needed for integration, thus relegating the actual business of building the Community to the background. Instead of asking with whom, in what context and under what conditions integration might be possible, attention has rather been on the institutions to be established and the measures to be promoted. Giving priority to identifying institutional arrangements completely diverts attention from the vital task of determining socio-economic objectives and setting priorities. Indeed, the key issue of deciding the best method of attaining set integration objectives was only tackled at the December 1999 summit in Lome and at the Bamako ministerial meeting in January 2000. These recent initiatives have been favourably received by both Member States and the donor community. These are initiatives which are certain to assist the countries in the region to strengthen the process of integrating the West African economies.