



**ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO**

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE MID-YEAR COORDINATION COMMITTEE  
BETWEEN THE AFRICAN UNION, REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL MECHANISMS**

**Nairobi, Kenya, 16 July 2023.**

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**ADDRESS ON STATUS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN ECOWAS**

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**BY**

**H.E. BOLA AHMED TINUBU  
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA  
AND  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE  
AND GOVERNMENT**

- Your Excellency President Azali Assoumani, Chairperson of the African Union;
- Your Excellency William Ruto, President and Head of State of the Republic of Kenya;
- Your Excellency Musa Faki Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
- Excellencies Heads of State and Government;
- Excellencies Heads of the Regional Economic Communities;
- Excellencies the Vice President and AUC Commissioners;
- Distinguished Heads of Regional and Continental Institutions;
- Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

1. In my capacity as the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, I am honoured to participate, for the first time, in the Mid-Year Coordination Meeting of the African Union (AU) and the Regional Economic Communities. On behalf of ECOWAS member States and Institutions, I would like to express our gratitude to the African Union for sustaining the efforts to strengthen collaboration and coordination between the

Continental Union, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RM). Let me also thank the Government and people of the Republic of Kenya for hosting the meeting and placing excellent facilities at our disposal. My delegation is particularly appreciative of the excellent courtesies accorded to us since our arrival in this beautiful city of Nairobi.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

2. Allow me to present to you the efforts that our regional economic community, ECOWAS, has deployed in the areas of trade, free movement of persons, investment, infrastructure, energy as well as in peace, and security.

### **Trade**

3. Trade remains the backbone of our integration. Although the Free Trade Area has been attained in ECOWAS, the Customs Union and Common Market have yet to be fully realised. Intra Community trade remains low at around 12%. The main products traded across our region remain minerals, food and industrial products. There is

a great disparity between member States in terms of capacity to contribute significantly to intra-regional trade ranging, from 2% for Cabo Verde to 43% for the Gambia. On the other hand, trade with third parties constitute the bulk of our external trade. The European Union continues to be the major external trading partner of the region, followed by Asia, North America, and the rest of Africa. On average, the region's trade in goods with European Union stands at \$34.5 billion. The region's trade stands at \$27.0 billion with Asia and \$9.8 billion with the United States of America. However, informal trade in the region is significant and appears to be growing. The major item of informal exchanges are food stuff, livestock, fuel, and manufactured consumer goods.

4. ECOWAS has been working to consolidate the gains of its trade liberalisation scheme and to enable the private sector to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The ECOWAS Commission has been supporting its Member States in the negotiations, ratification, and implementation of the AfCFTA. To date, 13 out of the 15 ECOWAS Member States have ratified the AfCFTA. ECOWAS is also

supporting its Member States to finalise their Draft Schedule of Specific Commitment (DSSC) as part of the negotiations on the five (5) Priority Sectors in Trade in Services. In my capacity representing ECOWAS and capacity as Nigeria's head of state, I affirm we shall keep faith with this year's theme: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation. Establishing the African free trade area has been a historic achievement, opening the door to continental economic growth and unity and nurturing the brave optimism that comes with these benign goals.

5. As Africans, we forge ahead no matter the barriers thrust before us. The world we inhabit is often unkind and uncertain. Past history and current global difficulties argue against our future success. Lessons of the past few years teach us that the world economy can be disrupted in ways that halt progress and invite downturn. Our nations can suddenly find themselves in dire situations if we choose to be passive observers of our fate. Such passivity does not commend itself to me. I will not listen to it. Neither should any African. The challenges we face mean that

governance will be difficult. They also mean that visionary good governance is necessary. Some observers assert a new scramble for Africa is afoot and it is much like the old scramble that plundered our continent.

6. But, here and now, let it be said to whomever the new scramblers might be that our continent may be old but our spirit is new. And it is strong. The bad that took place in the past must stay there. It shall never be repeated.

7. In the area of trade facilitation, ECOWAS has developed a Regional Trade and Transport Facilitation Implementation Strategy (RTTFS). It has also launched an ECOWAS Regional Trade facilitation Committee (RTFC) and has developed the strategic framework for the Regional ECOWAS E-Commerce Strategy. To improve healthy competition in the region. Besides, the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA) has now become fully operational.

8. Recently, 171 new companies and 263 new products were approved under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS), bringing the total number of Companies registered under the ETLIS to 3,453. For efficiency in trade, an Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT) has been launched, to connect national customs offices in the ECOWAS region. This is aimed at facilitating the regional transit trade and increase the pace and ease of international trade – particularly in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). The system is now fully operational in 7 of our Member States.

9. We have also put in place ECOWAS Regional Quality Policy (ECOQUAL) that seeks to develop a regional quality infrastructure, support standards development, reinforce conformity assessment bodies, while also strengthening quality culture within the region. We are also working on the establishment of the ECOWAS Agency for Quality, including the development of 44 standards on cassava, mango, textile & garments, and Information and Communication Technologies value chains.

## **Free movement of Persons**

10. Our achievement in the area of free movement of persons has been impressive particularly with the ECOWAS passport and its visa abolition regime but there is a lot more to be done. For example, 2018 was set as the deadline for the deployment of the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card (ENBIC). However, to date, only six (6) member States namely Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Benin, The Gambia, and Sierra Leone have adopted the card. We are intensifying advocacy and sensitization campaigns within member States to popularise the use and acceptance of the card, to address the bottlenecks our citizens face travelling across borders. ECOWAS has also commenced action towards the implementation of ECOVISA, a regional visa scheme that seeks to facilitate free movement of non-ECOWAS citizens within the region.

## **Investment Promotion**

11. ECOWAS has commenced the implementation of the ECOWAS Investment Market (ECIM), which provides guarantees for the free movement of capital and entrepreneurs. Already, the ECOWAS Investment Policy and Code have provided the institutional and

legal framework for the establishment of a coherent and predictable investment policy space and a regional approach to the promotion, facilitation, and protection of sustainable and responsible investment in the community. The ECOWAS Common Investment Council (ECIM Council) has also been launched.

12. In addition, to improved competitiveness of the regional business environment, ECOWAS is implementing the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) which conducts periodic review of the business climate in the region and promotes SME/Value Chains development.

### **Regional Infrastructure Development**

13. Physical integration through regional infrastructure development remains a critical objective of the region. For this reason, ECOWAS continues to accord priority attention to the **Lagos-Abidjan Highway Corridor** which is one of the biggest economic corridors in Africa and now is ready for investors. The Feasibility and Preliminary Design and Studies show a significant investment cost of nearly US\$15 billion for the whole highway with

an average economic rate of return of 15% per annum. In the same vein, preparations are under way for the development of the other corridors, namely the **Abidjan-Praia-Dakar**.

14. With regard to intra-regional cooperation, allow me to report that a joint border post between Nigeria and Cameroon has recently been commissioned and handed over in November 2022 to the authorities of the two countries. This project is a bridge between ECOWAS and ECCAS and a solid foundation for future cooperation and integration between our regions and ultimately the African continent.

### **Energy Sector**

15. In the energy sector, several generation and inter-connection projects have been implemented within the region. With the completion of the electric interconnection between Cote d'Ivoire-Liberia-Sierra Leone- Guinea ( 1,300 km) and between Senegal-The Gambia-Guinee Bissau and Guinea ( 1,700 km), all the 15 countries in West Africa have now been interconnected. The completion of the Information and Coordination Centre of the West African Power

Pool (WAPP) will enable member states to buy and sell electricity in the region as this centre will act as a regional system operator within the framework of the regional electricity market. Let me also emphasize that actually, ten (10) regional projects are at the construction phase and fifteen (15) are at the preparatory phases, all part of African Union Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA) portfolio projects. In the energy access sub-sector, several projects are at execution phases. These projects seek to increase the energy access which currently stands at 52%.

16. Inspired by PIDA, ECOWAS has developed a 25-year Masterplan (2020-2045) which comprises 201 regional projects covering all our member States. These have been estimated to cost of 131 billion USD. The four key sectors covered are Transport, Energy, Telecommunication and Water Resources. The projects have both soft components of facilitation, services improvement, efficiency measures, studies, project preparation, institution- and capacity building) and hard components of physical investment assets.

## **Peace, Security and Stability.**

17. We sit here in meaningful discussion of vital economic matters. Yet, it will be impossible to bring full meaning to what we attempt unless we give due consideration to the instability and conflict that now scar many of our nations.

18. The fullness of the integration we seek will elude us as long as several of our nations stand in midst of violence and war. The trade and commerce we talk of today refers to valued goods and services that improve life. They trade and commerce these nations suffer is of destruction and disorder that takes lives and steals opportunity.

19. We cannot integrate Africa and attain the prosperity we seek while our nearby brothers and sisters suffer in pain and anguish, they should not suffer.

20. We must advance as one continent toward peace and prosperity. Otherwise, we risk the creation of two or more Africa, one a select group of nations moving steadily while the rest remain trapped in the age-old mire of poverty, conflict and lack of hope. It

is very clear that in the area of peace, security, and stability, our region is confronted with the twin challenges of terrorism and reversal of democratic gains through undemocratic changes of Government.

21. To address these challenges, the ECOWAS Authority, which I have the honour to chair, has given directive regarding the enhancement of the role of the ECOWAS Standby Force for deployment to fight terrorism and undemocratic changes in government. The Authority has also resolved to raise our own funding internally to finance the peace support operations in our community. Meanwhile, we have continued to monitor the transition programmes in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea.

22. During the recently concluded Summit in Bissau, we resolved to maintain our engagement with the three countries to assiduously work towards the implementation of the 24-month transition calendars agreed with ECOWAS. Nonetheless, to assist Burkina Faso and Mali in defending their territories from occupation by terrorists, we have decided to provide support for their security

agencies. I wish to appeal to our international partners to assist to provide necessary support that will ensure the restoration of democratic order in these Member States. The economics underlying national security and security of our national economies are reflections of one another. Legitimate trade and violent conflict do not easily coexist. We must promote the former by ending the latter.

23. Furthermore, the ECOWAS Commission has continued to hold regular engagements and consultations with regional and international stakeholders, including the United Nations, African Union and the European Union aimed at deepening partnerships and creating opportunities for collaboration on continental peace and security initiatives.

24. Our Community is also carefully reviewing the political and security implications of the imminent withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Support Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as the presence of private military companies in the region, with a view to devising an appropriate regional response to any political and security fallouts. It is important that

we take appropriate steps to prevent a security vacuum that can be exploited further by terrorists and trans-national organised criminals in our region.

25. The ECOWAS Commission also continues to work with the Ministries in charge of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and Digitalisation and the National Regulatory Authorities in Member States on the ECOWAS Cybersecurity Agenda. ECOWAS has sought to encourage Member States to enhance their cybersecurity capabilities, safeguard their cyberspace and critical information infrastructure, and effectively combat cybercrimes. In this respect, some of the Member States such as Benin, Ghana, Senegal, and Togo were provided with digital forensic tools to improve the operational capabilities of State entities in charge of conducting forensics digital investigations.

26. ECOWAS continues to strengthen efforts to maintain peace and security in the region by ensuring the conduct of peaceful elections in Member States to deepen democracy and promote good governance. We have remained consistent in our election

observation missions by working together with the African Union, United Nations, and other partners. This we will continue to do as a means of ensuring a stable and conducive atmosphere to promote socio-economic development, reduce poverty and foster prosperity for our people.

**Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

27. The above overview of our activities over recent years shows that, despite the political and security challenges, ECOWAS has not relented in its quest to deepen regional integration through the effective implementation of trade integration programmes, facilitation of free movement of persons, promotion of investments building infrastructure, peace, security, and stability in our sub-region.

28. Let me conclude by informing Excellencies, Distinguished Participants that the ECOWAS Commission stands ready to provide details of the programmes that are being implemented.

29. **I thank you for your kind attention.**