

# Support to the ECOWAS Commission

## Promoting Regional Integration through Strategic Management and Technical Advice

### Background

West Africa is characterised by considerable heterogeneity. While many West African countries count among the least developed in the world, other states in the region have high economic growth rates. This disparity contributes to imbalances of power and exacerbates conflicts, with the result that the political situation in some West African countries remains fragile. In this context, initiatives aimed at strengthening regional integration play an important role in economic and political development, and in the reduction of poverty in West Africa.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 with the vision to create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance. The ECOWAS Commission, the executive body of the Community, has been entrusted to strategically plan, steer, coordinate and monitor this increasing regional integration. It is mandated to develop and implement regional mechanisms and strategies for preventing conflict and stabilising peace in the region.

### Our approach

Germany has been supporting the ECOWAS Commission through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH since 2006. Commissioned and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the current Programme, “Support to the ECOWAS Commission” aims to strengthen the ECOWAS Commission in executing its core mandate, which is facilitating economic and political integration. GIZ assists in the development of the Commission’s

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Project region	ECOWAS Commission/Headquarters based in Abuja 15 ECOWAS Member States
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capacity to supervise, implement and monitor ECOWAS decisions in the fields of economic and trade policy as well as peace and security.

Our advisory services target three fields of action:

- Organisational Development of the ECOWAS Commission:**  
We support the ECOWAS Commission’s strategic management. This aims to improve the Commission’s capacity to steer its work towards its strategic goals through impact oriented monitoring. In addition, the programme strengthens selected internal management capacities, such as Human Resources Management and Knowledge Management. The outcomes of this support benefit the other two fields of action.
- Trade and Customs:** In this field of action, we implement the project “Promoting West Africa Trade Integration” (WATIP), with additional funding from the European Union. Our support targets the capacities of the ECOWAS Commission to design and implement its trade policy and to promote trade within West Africa and between the region and the rest of



Conference Hall at the ECOWAS Commission Head Quarters, Abuja, Nigeria · ECOWAS Election Observation, April 2014, Guinea-Bissau

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the world. To enhance intraregional trade, we strengthen the ECOWAS Commission in promoting and improving the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS). We also support the introduction of the Common External Tariff (CET) throughout the ECOWAS region by advising on legal changes and by offering training and workshops for customs administrations in ECOWAS Member States.

3. **Peace and Security:** We promote cooperation between key actors in the Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department. With the purpose of strengthening the Commission's capacities for conflict prevention and peacekeeping in the region, we aim to improve the ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN), the professionalization of election observation and the development of policies and procedures for the civilian component of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). Through funding from the German Foreign Office, we also strengthen the police component of the ECOWAS Standby Force.

## Results so far

To date, GIZ support to the ECOWAS Commission has contributed to the following results:

- An operational and harmonised regional monitoring system which informs the Commission about the progress of ECOWAS activities and programmes for the promotion of regional integration.
- A first draft of the ECOWAS Community Strategic Framework (CSF) that is ready to be presented to ECOWAS Member States. Once adopted, the CSF will set the strategic orientation and priorities for the timeframe 2016 to 2020. This is an important step for the effective establishment of ECOWAS regional integration initiatives.
- With our support, the negotiations on the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) were finalised and tariff books were provided. As a result, ECOWAS Member States started with the gradual implementation of the CET in January 2015. Currently, the programme enables the Commission to ensure the correct application of the CET at the national level through informational materials, training and sensitization. So far, we have trained up to 2.000 customs officers and freight forwarders on the correct application of the CET. Our sensitization activities reached more than 3.000 representatives of parliaments, the private sector, civil society and the media.
- A website and brochures on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) are now available in all three official ECOWAS languages: English, French and Portuguese. With our support, the ECOWAS Commission was able to train and to sensitize up to 3.000 government officials and traders on the application of ETLS. With more information on and improved procedures for intraregional trade, traders will be encouraged to engage more in cross border transactions. The programme also supports the simplification of procedures for intraregional trade.
- A functional Election Observation Database and an improved Election Observation Methodology have been established, which contribute to the prevention of conflicts in the context of election-related crises.
- The new Policy Framework of the Civilian Dimension of the ECOWAS Standby Force gives strategic orientation for the deployment of civilian experts in ECOWAS Peace Support Operations. The possibility to address not only security concerns but also political, human rights, humanitarian and other non-military dimensions is an important contribution to the effective management of conflicts.

As a federally owned enterprise, we support the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.