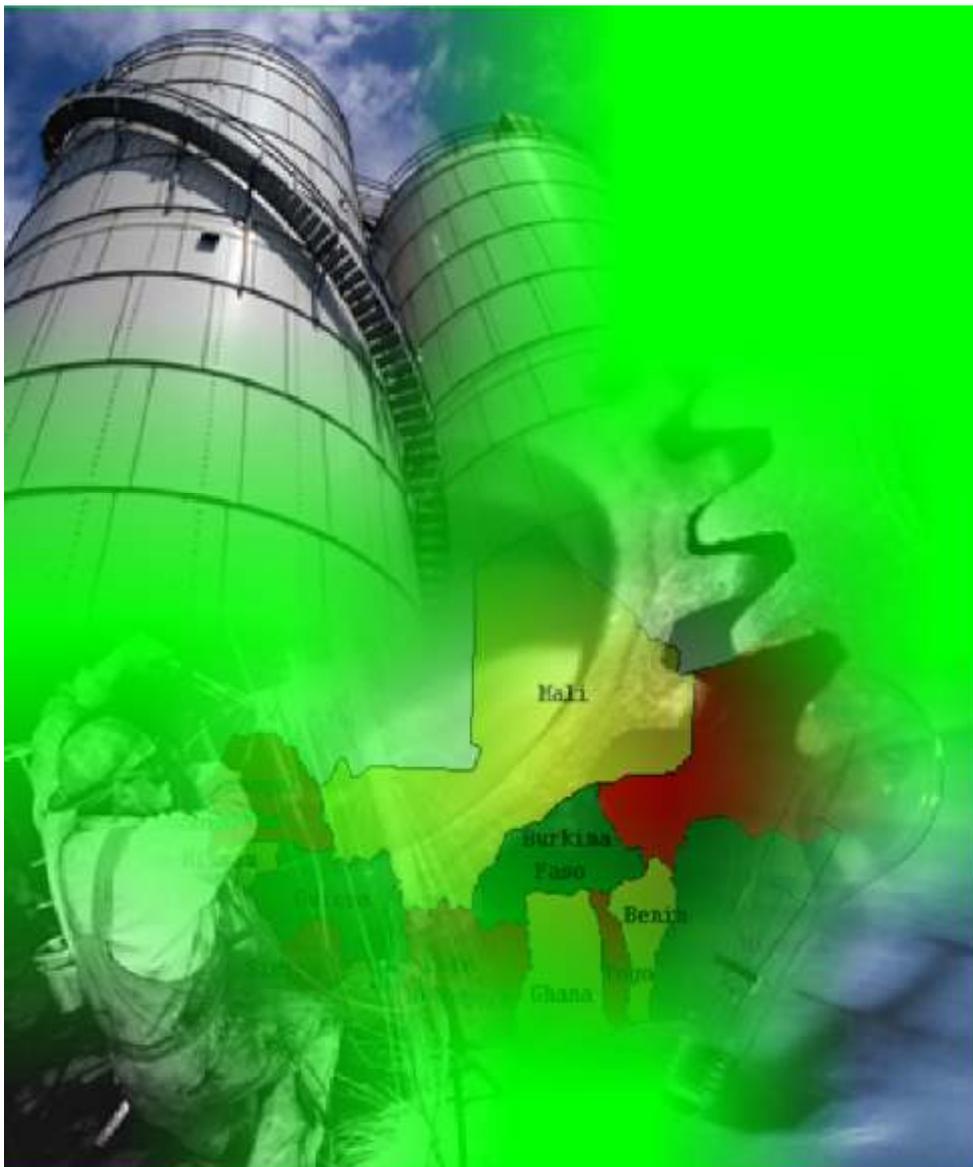


# ECOWAS VISION 2020



ECOWAS VISION 2020

The Reader Friendly Version

**Towards A Democratic  
And  
Prosperous Community**

ECOWAS CEDEAO  
June 2010

## Vision Statement



*To create a borderless,  
peaceful, prosperous and  
cohesive region, built on  
good governance and where  
people have the capacity to  
access and harness its  
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and environmental  
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### ECOWAS VISION 2020

#### **Towards A Democratic And Prosperous Community**

*The Reader Friendly Version*

Under the Supervision of  
The Vice President of ECOWAS Commission  
and the Coordination of the Director,  
Strategic Planning  
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## Overview

Since its creation on 28 May 1975 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been promoting economic cooperation and regional integration as a tool for an accelerated development of the West African economy. Regional integration remains the most viable and appropriate tool for accelerating and achieving the sustainable development of the West African countries. Consequently, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government have reaffirmed its commitment to improve the West Africa integration process and enhance its effectiveness.

To achieve this objective, the Authority adopted a resolution in June 2007 to introduce the transformational ECOWAS Vision 2020. The ECOWAS Vision 2020 is aimed at setting a clear direction and goal to significantly raise the standard of living of the people through conscious and inclusive programmes that will guarantee a bright future for West Africa and -shape the destiny of the region for many years to come. In this connection the President of the ECOWAS Commission was directed to mobilize the citizens of the region to the vision, and help to achieve it by 2020. It is gratifying that the visioning process has achieved remarkable progress, culminating in the formulation and preparation of this Vision Document. This accomplishment represents a significant step, particularly given the commendable effort to involve all relevant stakeholders in the visioning process.

The involvement of all stakeholders within and outside government machinery in the visioning process augurs well for the achievement of our common objective of a much better West Africa.

This reflects the aspiration of the region's leaders to make the ECOWAS Vision 2020 a people's document. The implication is that, henceforth, both the region's integration and development processes would be people-centered and people-driven. This paradigm shift in attitudes and institutional orientation



is vital if the region is to create an environment in which the business community and the general public will have a shared vision and work together to realize the development aspirations of the people to achieve equitable and broad-based growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Vision Document is also emphatic and unequivocal about the other changes to be made in the way the political and socio-economic life of the region is viewed and managed; these are the necessary and vital new orientations that must be embraced by all our people to successfully bring an end to poverty and deprivation. As clearly enunciated in the document, the Vision 2020 is feasible and realizable. For this to happen, all stakeholders in the West African enterprise need to make required changes in their policy formulation and implementation, as well as their institutional capacity.

### What is ECOWAS Vision 2020?

In moving to adopt a common people-oriented regional vision, ECOWAS leaders recognize that past and unsuccessful Development efforts have been dominated by government and its agents. Believing strongly that West Africa's development can best be achieved by working together within an ECOWAS of people framework, the ECOWAS Heads of State have expressed a common regional will by adopting a vision that replaces the current "ECOWAS of States" with an "ECOWAS of People".

In adopting an "ECOWAS of People" vision in 2007 the West African Heads of States undertook to Respond to the following topical questions:

- Is the meaning of an ECOWAS of People obvious and self-evident?
- Does it have the same meaning for most People?
- Is there a convergence of views and common understanding around the theme?
- What are the unifying tenets of a West African shared vision?
- Is the vision simple enough to be understood by all and will its adoption make a difference to the way the development process is conducted?
- Is the vision realistic and attainable?
- Are there some necessary conditions that must be met to realize the regional vision?
- Who are the principal stakeholders that must be involved in the visioning process to ensure a broad based, bottom-up grass-root ownership across the sub-region?

The Vision of ECOWAS is described as follows:

- A borderless region where the population have access to its abundant resources and is able to exploit them through the creation of opportunities under a sustainable environment.
- An integrated region within which the population enjoy free movement, have access to efficient

education and health, engage in economic activities and live in dignity, in an environment of peace and security.

- A region governed in accordance with the principles of democracy, the rule of law and Good governance.

This vision is encapsulated in a vision statement Thus:

*"To create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation."*

### A Vision For Structural and Institutional Transformation

At the Community level, the citizens envision an ECOWAS region in which by 2020 they:

- Will be living in a developed and integrated West Africa where all the 15 national economies have been fused into one integrated, competitive and resilient market, and everyone can operate freely anywhere within the region.
- Will have a dynamic regional economy driven by a regionally-inclined business community operating in an efficient and diversified regional production system sustained by modern infrastructural networks;
- Will have a highly skilled, flexible and mobile workforce; adequately resourced financial and capital markets; affordable and accessible health and educational systems; and political and economic governance mechanisms operating at regional and national levels that ensure peace, stability and personal security.

At the national level, the citizens envision, by 2020, an ECOWAS region in which:

- Each Member State will have a national development policy with a strong regional orientation which is effectively managed and coordinated by a well-endowed

national institution dedicated to the regional integration process.

- All ECOWAS countries will show credible evidence of judicial, institutional and policy efforts that internalize regional integration in their national development strategy as embodied in the protocol that created ECOWAS in 1975.
- Every country would demonstrably have undertaken the required constitutional and administrative measures to entrench regional approach and create the relevant national implementing agencies needed To implement key ECOWAS integration programmes.
- All Member States and their key institutional agencies demonstrate the spirit of "ownership" and provide conducive policy space in which national development agenda and strategies are designed bearing in mind and incorporating regional issues within a regional development framework that address national and complementary regional needs.
- All Member State view the region individually and collectively as a mutually-dependent economic space which is strengthened and preserved through Sustained collective efforts aimed at ending aid dependency.



It is a vision that, in its simplest terms, would mean the same thing and have the same significance to the taxi driver in Freetown, the lawyer in Dakar, the fisherman in Accra, the cotton farmer in a Malian village, the civil servant in Niamey, the doctor in Lagos and all other parts of the Community. It is underpinned by a "bottom up" approach involving all stakeholders: various segments of the population, including a large number of ordinary citizens who contribute to the formulation through such consultative mechanisms such as an interactive website, questionnaires, surveys, media outreach, consultative workshops, focus groups and fact-finding missions. The Vision, therefore, is an embodiment of views and aspirations of the citizens of ECOWAS and their abiding conviction that economic cooperation and regional integration offers the best avenue for achieving economic development and poverty reduction in the region.



## ECOWAS of Today

### Socio-Political Overview

West Africa today is largely shaped by its political past. This political history spans from the pre-colonial era of tribal political systems and kingdoms to the dark days of colonialism. This was followed by a period of struggle for independence and self-determination and then by a period of political instability and military interventions between the mid-1960s and early 1990s. Overtime, democratic process began to evolve in place of decades of military dictatorship. Even though the region's traditions and institutions are still fragile, it is noteworthy that today all 15 ECOWAS Member States have democratically elected governments.

Governance, aims to strengthen peace, democracy and stability in the region. Under the provisions of the Protocol, ECOWAS has the authority and mandate to suspend any member in which an elected government is removed by military force. The protocol also established the ECOWAS election monitoring and observatory process which has been playing an increasing role in organizing and supervising the conduct of election and other governance issues in the member countries.

ECOWAS has prepared a Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy to complement national poverty eradication programmes of Member States. The proposed regional PRSP offers a strategic framework for prioritizing regional programmes aimed at addressing cross-boundary dimensions of poverty,

Today, civil society organizations in member countries play active roles by organizing their members to forge networks, implement community projects and build intermediary bodies for solidarity and advocacy work on critical issues. These civil society organizations are also addressing critical social needs like water and health care through their projects.



### Economic Overview

In 2007, the combined GDP of the ECOWAS sub-region was estimated at \$261.761 billion which translates into an income per capita of \$949. This level of per capita income puts ECOWAS far below the current global average of \$10,500. The region's economic growth rate in 2008 was estimated at 5.1 percent, (a decline from the 2007 growth rate of 5.6 percent and projected to decline further in 2009 to 4.7 percent). This rate of growth is far below the minimum 7 percent growth rate required to meet the poverty reduction goals under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Even though this growth rate is higher than the rate of population increase, it is eroded by Inflation which fluctuated between 7.1% in 2006 and about 6.3% by end of 2008. Agriculture is the largest sector and provides employment for 60 percent of the region's active population, most engaged in the primary and traditional agriculture.

Under the UN classification of countries using income as a measure of economic well-being, (about 73 percent) of West African states are designated as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). ECOWAS accounts for 35 percent of the African LDC's - making West Africa the foremost LDC region in Africa and the world. No Less than 11 of the 15 ECOWAS countries exhibit some of the lowest socio-economic development indicators, including the lowest Human Development Index ratings in the world.

Apart from this extremely low level of development, there is considerable variation in the distribution of Income wealth in West Africa. The substantial income disparity makes living conditions difficult in some places, especially among rural populations. Consequently, the average annual per capita income of \$949 in 2007, veils the grimmer reality that nearly 60 percent of the people in the region live on less than \$1 a day. This is a far larger proportion and is above the 46 percent for sub-Saharan Africa and 15 percent for EAP region. Indeed, West Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of poverty in the world today.

The above realities and economic condition, coupled with the small and fragmented national economies with limited scope of economies of scale underscores the importance of regional integration in West Africa. It is instructive to note that the ECOWAS Commission has been promoting economic cooperation and regional integration from different facets, namely:

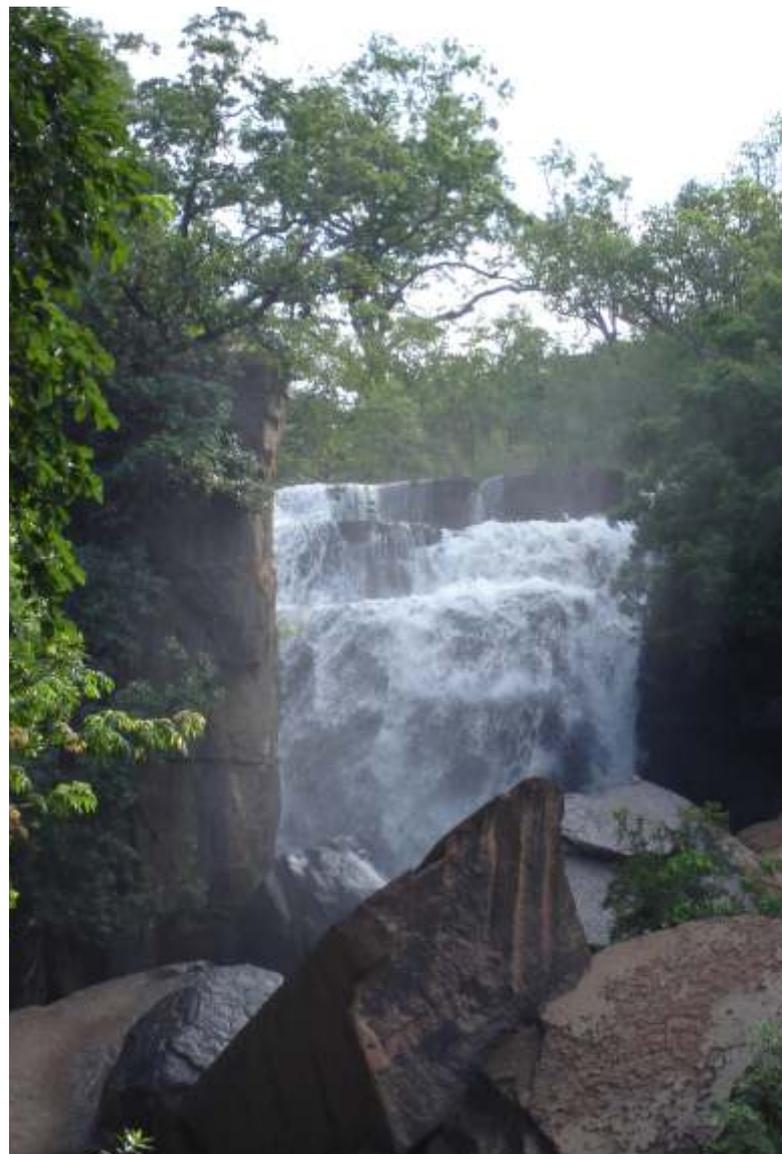
- (i.) Trade Integration;
- (ii.) Market (product, financial, labour, etc.) Integration;
- (iii.) Monetary integration;
- (iv.) Physical integration;
- (v.) Production integration; and
- (vi.) Political integration.

With respect to trade and market integration, West Africa is almost a custom union - having attained a free trade status since January 2000 and adopted a common external tariff (CET).

### Socio-Cultural Overview

In 2008, the ECOWAS region had a population of 290 million, constituting 4.6 percent of the world Population and over 40 percent of that of sub-Saharan Africa, thus making the region the most densely populated on the continent. At an annual growth rate exceeding 3 percent, the West African population presents serious socio-economic challenges and population dynamics which constitute a major long-term development issue. As a region with diverse cultures and peoples, the socio-cultural dimension of development remains a necessary building block for establishing peace and Security in the region.





**Environment and Natural Resources**  
The ECOWAS region has considerable ecological and agronomical potential with complementary Natural ecological areas. The region has vast arable land available for exploitation and several million hectares of pastoral land for use, while the different river basins offer significant potential for irrigation. West Africa has four ecological zones with complementary potentials for development.

ECOWAS is promoting natural resource and environmental management through the implementation of regional and international conventions, treaties and agreements, regional development, training and research programmes in natural resource management.

### Challenges to Integration and Development in ECOWAS

ECOWAS faces a number of challenges and obstacles to the smooth and accelerated development and integration of its society. These challenges are transnational in nature and increasingly inter-connected, ranging from infectious diseases like malaria and HIV & AIDS to drug, human and arms-trafficking. Other trans-border obstacles include Inadequate physical infrastructures (transport, energy, communication) and poor delivery mechanism in social Infrastructure; such as education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation. Across the region, there are such ecological and environmental challenges as drought and desertification, deforestation, erosion and Soil degradation.

### Socio-Economic Bottlenecks

- Human Insecurity
- Gender Inequality and Vulnerability of some Segments of the Population
- Poor Quality of Social Services
- Population Pressures on Scarce Resources
- Slow Process of Economic Integration
- Infrastructure Inadequacy
- High cost of Doing Business
- Nascent and Weak Private Sector Capacity and Institutions
- Over-dependence on Commodity Exports
- Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

### Political Challenges

- Fragile Political Fusions: Across the sub-region
- Political Commitment to Deepen Regional Integration
- Absence of Deep Regional Integration
- Intra-regional Challenges (massive migration, drug trafficking, wide proliferation of small arms and light weapons)

Adverse External Factors (brain drain, caused mainly by such endogenous factors as lack of personal political security, inadequate employment opportunities, poor remuneration and conditions of service).

### Features of a Better ECOWAS of People

- Multi-lingualism
- Single Market
- Socio-economic Growth and Development
- Investment in Education, Training and the Youth
- Multiculturalism
- Tolerance and Respect for Human Rights
- Vibrant Civil Society
- Mutual Responsibility and Accountability
- Interest in Community Affairs
- Positive Image

### Guiding Principles and Values of an ECOWAS of People

The ECOWAS Vision 2020 calls for significant re-orientation in the conduct of national and regional affairs, including the incorporation of certain fundamental principles and values. All these must be done at regional and national levels to realize the *Vision of ECOWAS of People*, and this includes regional policies, programmes and processes, which must be consistent with the following baselines:

- Shared Vision
- Inclusion and Participation
- Collaborative Partnerships and Subsidiarity
- Regional Integration Approach
- People-centered and Results-oriented Approach
- Accountable Leadership



### Building Blocks of the Vision

The transition from an “ECOWAS of States” to an “ECOWAS of People”: Five Transformational building Blocks of Integrative Development of West Africa are discernible. These are regional resource development, peace and security, governance, economic and monetary integration, and private sector growth.

### Regional Resource Development

We envision by 2020, an inclusive society achieved through human capital development and empowerment, offering a peaceful and healthy environment where women, children and youths thrive and have equal opportunities to excel and have equitable access to resources for human and social development.



### Peace and Security

We envision, by 2020, a secure and socially cohesive West Africa devoid of conflicts, whose leaders and people place a high premium on peace and collective regional security, effective operation of an ECOWAS regional defense and security system that will effectively combat illegal arms and drugs. There will be conscious and sustained collective effort to eliminate social discrimination or exclusion, and there will be a demonstrable strong drive to inculcate acceptance of the socio-cultural diversities of the region as a positive factor that enriches life in the region.



We envision, by 2020, a unified region that is integrated into the continental and global economic space and governed using the principles of good political and economic governance, transparency, and accountability in the use of public resources and where fundamental human rights are protected and respected.

#### Economic and Monetary Integration

We envision, by 2020: A single unified regional market with a common currency supported by an integrated and efficient financial market and payment settlement system; an ECOWAS of people where trade and commerce are conducted efficiently and with ease.



We envision, by 2020, an ECOWAS of people with a conducive policy environment in which the private sector will be the primary engine of growth and development; an integrated regional production base developed by competitive private sector activities which provide production and distribution levers for deeper regional integration and development, supported by an efficient ECOWAS business body that promotes strong public-private partnerships for generating wealth to sustain the development and prosperity of the region.

#### Conclusion

A viable vision is one that is simple, inclusive and implementable. A vision is like a wish, without a strategy and implementable and implemented action Plan, it will remain a wish. It is envisioned that by 2020 the Vision of the ECOWAS of People" will have been implemented and the region enjoying the benefits of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous West Africa.



