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

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES

FINAL COMMUNIQUE 1996/1997

Abuja August 1997

The Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held its Twentieth Ordinary Session in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 28 and 29 August, 1997 under the Chairmanship of His Excellency General Sani Abacha, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

2. Present at the session were the following Heads of State and Government or their duly accredited representatives:

- His Excellency Mathieu KEREKOU,
  President of the Republic of BENIN

- His Excellency Blaise COMPAORE
  President of FASO
  Chairman of the Council of Ministers
  BURKINA FASO

- His Excellency Colonel Yahya A.J.J. JAMMEH
  President of the Republic The GAMBIA

- His Excellency Flt-Lt Jerry John RAWLINGS (Rtd)
  President of the Republic of GHANA

- His Excellency General Lansana CONTE
  President of the Republic of GUINEA

- His Excellency General Joao Bernardo VIEIRA
  President of the Republic of GUINEA BISSAU

- His Excellency Charles Ghankay TAYLOR
  President of the Republic of LIBERIA

- His Excellency Alpha Oumar KONARE
  President of the Republic of MALI

- His Excellency General Ibrahim Mainassara BARE
  President of the Republic of NIGER

- His Excellency General Sani ABACHA
  Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
  of the Federal Republic of NIGERIA

- His Excellency Ahmad Tejan KABBAH
  President of the Republic of SIERRA LEONE

- His Excellency General Gnassingbe EYADEMA
  President of the TOGOLESE Republic

- His Excellency Habib THIAM
  Prime Minister of the Republic of SENEGAL

- The Honourable Dr. Alexandre MONTEIRO
  Secretary of State
  Minister of Commerce, Industry & Tourism
  representing the Prime Minister and Head of Government
  of CABO VERDE

- The Honourable Amara ESSY
  MInister of Foreign Affairs
  representing the President of COTE D'IVOIRE

- The Honourable Abdellahi Ould NEM
  Minister of Commerce, Handicraft and Tourism
  representing the President of the Islamic Republic of
  MAURITANIA

3. Attending the Twentieth Session as observers were :

- The Secretary-General of the Organisation of
  African Unity (OAU)

- The Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations,
  representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations

- The Chairman of the Committee of Governors of Central Banks
  of West Africa

- The Director General of the West African Monetary
  Agency (WAMA)

- The President of the West African Development Bank (BOAD)
- The President of ECOBANK Transnational Incorporated (ETI)
- The President of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce (FWACC)
- The Secretary-General of the West African Women's Association (WAWA)
- The Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO)
- The representative of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA)
- The Representative of FAGACE
- The Representative of West African Rice Development Association (WARDA)
- The Representative of the African Development Bank (ADB)
- The Representative of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA)
- The Representative of the African Center for Monetary Studies (ACMS)
- The Representative of the World Bank
- The Representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- The Representative of the European Union (EU)
- The Representative of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)
- The Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The Representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
- The Representative of the United Nations Organisation for Industrial Development (UNIDO)

- The Representative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

- The Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

- The Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- The Representative of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL)

- The representative of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)

- And a large number of High Commissioners and Ambassadors accredited to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN WEST AFRICA

4. Heads of State and Government noted with satisfaction that over the past few years, most ECOWAS countries have made significant advances in the development of political institutions and economic structures, as a result of which the region recorded an appreciable economic growth rate of about 4 %, which is above the rate of population growth.

5. The Authority stressed that the monetary, budgetary, and structural policies needed to promote strong and positive growth are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The Heads of State and Government also emphasised the need to implement sound macro-economic policies which would consolidate the successes achieved by most ECOWAS Member States in the areas of inflation control, monetary discipline and improved adjustment policies, all of which are necessary for the harmonisation of economic and financial policies of ECOWAS countries.

6. The Authority took note and expressed its appreciation of the recent initiative by the international community to resolve the debt problems (including multilateral debt) of heavily indebted poor countries. The Authority noted with regret however that the criteria for eligibility are so strict that only two ECOWAS Member States qualify. It therefore appealed to the international community to make the criteria for eligibility more flexible to enable more countries in the region to benefit from the initiative.

LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR WEST AFRICA

7. Heads of State and Government exchanged views on the future perspectives of the West African economy. Convinced that significant development could only be achieved through a conscious and sustained effort at managing the national economies, the Authority urged all Member States to embark on formulating strategic long-term development frameworks such as initiated in Côte d'Ivoire under the African Elephant Programme, in Ghana as Vision 2020 and in Nigeria as Vision 2010.

8. Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their belief that national development could only succeed if conceived within a regional framework. It was therefore proposed that national long-term development frameworks should be formulated, based on a regional approach. The Authority directed the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with Member States and the relevant international institutions to complete the formulation of the ECOWAS regional development programme.

9. In this regard, Heads of State and Government welcomed the re-negotiation of the Lome Convention in September 1998 as an opportunity to enhance the contribution of European Union assistance to West African development. The

Authority fully endorsed the declaration on future ACP/EU relations made in May 1997 at Lome by West African national authorising officers. That declaration stressed that future European Union assistance to ECOWAS countries should focus on promoting West African integration. Heads of State and Government called upon the other development partners, especially the ADB, UNDP, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide long-term development assistance that fosters West African integration.

MONETARY INTEGRATION PROGRAMME

10. Heads of State and Government re-affirmed their full commitment to regional monetary integration and the eventual adoption of a single West African currency . They expressed satisfaction with the progress made during the year regarding the harmonisation of national economic and financial policies. In order to accelerate the achievement of the objective of a single monetary zone by the year 2000, the Authority created an ad hoc monitoring committee comprising the five Heads of State of Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Togo. On the basis of technical reports and proposals submitted to it, the Committee would give periodic policy directives and new orientations to facilitate compliance by Member States with the agreed monetary and financial targets. The Committee would also give the necessary political support to the programme and foster the mobilisation of the support required from relevant international organisations for the execution of the ECOWAS monetary integration programme.

LAUNCHING OF ECOWAS TRAVELLERS CHEQUE

11. Heads of State and Government considered ways of facilitating intra-Community payments as a means of enhancing regional transactions. The Authority agreed to complement the payments settlement scheme of the West

African Monetary Agency (WAMA) through the introduction of ECOWAS travellers cheque. It was decided therefore that the ECOWAS travellers cheque should be launched at the next meeting of the Committee of Governors of Central Banks, scheduled to take place towards the end of the year.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF THE ECOWAS FUND

12. Heads of State and Government recalled their decision in 1987 to open equity participation in the Fund's capital to non-regionals. After a review of proposals submitted on the matter, the Authority agreed in principle that the Fund should be transformed into a more commercially-oriented institution, without losing sight of its development and integration objectives. The management of the Fund was, therefore, directed to commission a feasibility study to determine the type of financial institution that the ECOWAS Fund should be transformed into.

APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNITY LEVY

13. Heads of State and Government expressed concern over the poor performance of the Community institutions which was due partly to the inadequacy of financial resources, arising from the irregular payment of Member States contributions. It was recalled that, as a solution to this financial problem, the Revised Treaty provides for a Community levy, to replace direct budgetary contributions by Member States.

14. The Authority deplored the very slow pace of ratification of the Protocol on the application of the Community levy which had not made it possible for the levy to be introduced in January 1997. Desirous of generating as soon as possible sufficient resources for revitalising the West African integration process, Heads of State and Government passed a resolution urging all Member States to ratify this

protocol immediately and include the Community levy in their 1998 budget statements, so that the imposition of the levy could commence in January 1998.

LAUNCHING OF PHASE II OF ECOWAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

15. Heads of State and Government reviewed the status of the development of the regional telecommunications network against the background of the recent tremendous advances in the global communication system. Expressing its satisfaction with the successful completion of the first phase of the ECOWAS regional network, the Authority adopted the second phase of the West African telecommunications development programme, INTELCOM II.

16. This ECOWAS programme will modernise and expand the services of the telecommunications sector through full digitalisation and installation of other modern facilities, as well as an increase in telephone density. The programme is to ensure intra-Community transit, inter-connection, uniformity and compatibility. The programme therefore provides the requisite regulatory framework and the adoption of other convergence criteria. Heads of State and Government welcomed the emphasis that the programme gives to private sector participation and the commercialisation of retained public enterprises. The international financial institutions were invited to give their full support to the implementation of INTELCOM II.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF DRUG ABUSE IN THE WEST AFRICAN REGION

17. Heads of State and Government expressed concern over the rapid spread of drug abuse in West Africa and the increasing role of the region as a transit centre

for international drug trafficking. The Authority approved the Praia Political Declaration and Plan of Action which give fresh impetus to waging a more rigorous and coordinated war against drugs in the West African region. Heads of State and Government appealed to the United Nations Drug Control Programme and other relevant agencies to increase their support for drug control in West Africa.

CROSS-BORDER CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

18. The Authority expressed concern over the increasing incidence of cross-border criminal activities and stressed the need to mount a coordinated campaign against this menace.

REGIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

19. Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their determination to create within West Africa the peaceful and stable environment necessary for sustained development and regional integration. The Authority commended the Liberian people for putting behind them the traumatic experience of the civil war and conducting peaceful election on multi-party basis. Heads of State and Government recognising the need to sustain peace and development in Liberia, urged the people of the Republic of Liberia, Member States of ECOWAS, and the international community as a whole to support Liberia's post-war needs in the areas of repatriation and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons, re-integration, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

20. The Authority congratulated His Excellency President Charles Ghankay Taylor on his election and encouraged him to continue his policy of reconciliation and national unity. Following the free and democratic election in Liberia, the

Authority lifted all sanctions and embargos on Liberia and requested the international community to do the same.

21. The Authority expressed its deep appreciation to all those who contributed to the successful implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia on the regional front. Special recognition was given to the immense and unstinted contribution of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine, the Member States contributing troops to the ECOWAS peace-keeping force (ECOMOG), and the gallant officers and men of ECOMOG. Similarly, the Authority expressed grateful thanks to the OAU, the UN, the EU and countries in the international community which made notable contributions to the peace effort. A minute's silence and prayer was observed in memory of all those who lost their lives in the Liberian civil war.

22. The Authority stressed that the restoration of peace to Liberia had convincingly demonstrated West African solidarity and its ability to resolve regional problems through mutual trust, tolerance, self-sacrifice and strong leadership. Heads of State and Government made a strong appeal for continued support from both within and outside West Africa for re-building Liberia. In this regard, the Authority expressed its willingness to extend, upon the request of the Government of Liberia, the stay of ECOMOG in Liberia for an extra period to be mutually agreed. The ECOWAS Executive Secretary was directed to negotiate appropriate protocols with the Government of Liberia to legalise further ECOWAS military/security assistance package to Liberia through ECOMOG. The financing of this operation will be borne by the Liberian government. However, the Authority appealed to other ECOWAS Member States and the international community to assist in this effort. The Executive Secretariat was directed to participate in the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of a reconstruction programme for Liberia.

23. Heads of State and Government, recalling the ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles which they adopted at Abuja in July 1991, re-iterated their unwavering commitment to the establishment and smooth functioning of democratic institutions in each ECOWAS Member State. The Authority expressed its unreserved condemnation of the violent and unconstitutional overthrow of the democratically elected government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on 25 May 1997. Heads of State and Government deplored the looting, loss of life and property that accompanied the coup d'état, and the subsequent complete disruption of life in Sierra Leone.

24. The Authority warmly congratulated the ECOWAS Committee of Four on Sierra Leone and fully endorsed the objectives set out by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs with regards to Sierra Leone, which had also received the approval of the United Nations Security Council, namely:

i) the early reinstatement of the legitimate Government of President Tejan KABBAH

ii) the return of peace and security; and

iii) the resolution of the issues of refugees and displaced persons.

25. The Authority expressed its determination to deploy all efforts towards the peaceful resolution of the Sierra Leone crisis, and called for the cooperation and understanding of all the parties concerned. The Authority, deeply concerned about the breakdown of negotiations in Abidjan on 30th July 1997 between the Committee of Four and the illegal regime in Sierra Leone, and in view of the intransigence of the illegal regime, approved a package of sanctions and blockade as a further measure to ensure the restoration of the legitimate Government of President Tejan Kabbah. Heads of State and Government mandated ECOMOG,

to specifically monitor the ceasefire, enforce sanctions and embargo and secure the peace in Sierra Leone.

26. The Authority decided to enlarge the membership of the Committee responsible for monitoring the situation in Sierra Leone to five countries, by including the Republic of Liberia. It also decided to raise the status of the Committee to the level of Heads of State and Government.

CRISIS IN THE CONGO

27. Heads of State and Government received with appreciation, a special message from His Excellency Alhaji Omar BONGO, President of Gabon and Chairman of the International Mediation Committee on the Congo crisis. The Authority deeply regretted the deteriorating situation in the Congo. It made a strong appeal to all the parties concerned to observe the cease-fire and be fully committed to peace and political dialogue.

28. The Authority expressed its support for the untiring efforts of President El Hadj Omar Bongo to resolve the Congo crisis and has decided to send a delegation.

TRANSFER OF ECOWAS SECRETARIAT TO ABUJA

29. Heads of State and Government regretted the delayed movement of the Secretariat staff to Abuja because of the lack of staff accommodation. The Authority expressed warm gratitude to the Federal Government of Nigeria for the provision of a loan to enable the Community construct staff residential quarters in Abuja. Heads of State and Government directed the Executive Secretary to give priority attention to the matter so that the transfer of the ECOWAS Secretariat to Abuja could be completed during the course of 1998.

AWARD OF ECOWAS PRIZE OF EXCELLENCE

30. Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to the encouragement of research and the development of indigenous technology. The Authority felt convinced of the existence of a substantial regional potential in this field and expressed its satisfaction with progress already being made. The Authority further directed that future exercises should be more widely publicised throughout Member States so as to tap the abundant talent in the region. In recognition of their outstanding achievements in original research work the First ECOWAS Prize for Excellence in African pharmacopoeia was awarded to:

Dr. Modou LO of Senegal for his contribution to botanical and physico-chemical research on the sterculia gum; and

Prof. Augustine O. OKHAMAFE of Nigeria for his success in the extraction, development and utilisation of cellulose from selected agricultural waste.

EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE TO MR. EDOUARD BENJAMIN

31. Heads of State and Government, noting the ill health of Mr. Edouard BENJAMIN, the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, wished him speedy recovery. They also expressed their gratitude to him for his service to the Community during his tenure.

APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

32. Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of strong leadership in the two Institutions of the Community and proceeded to make the following decisions:

a) Executive Secretary

33. The Authority re-allocated the post of Executive Secretary to the Republic of Guinea and appointed Mr. Lansana KOUYATE as the new ECOWAS Executive Secretary as from 1st September 1997 for a four-year term.

b) Other Statutory Officers

34. The Authority noted that the tenure of office of the other statutory appointees will end between now and January 3, 1998 and stressed the need to properly evaluate them. This evaluation will be done under the supervision of the Executive Secretary and in collaboration with the ad hoc Ministerial commitee on the Selection and Evaluation of Statutory Appointees. The services of an expert bureau should be employed to facilitate this task.

35. The statutory appointees adjudged competent may be retained.

36. The posts of statutory officers whose terms are not renewed would be declared vacant and advertised in all Member States of the Community. The Authority decided that in order to recruit the best candidates, steps must be taken to ensure that all Member States have equal opportunity to serve the Community.

37. The Authority also decided that the new Executive Secretary should take steps to review the structure of the Institutions of the Community. In this process he should employ the services of competent consultants.

c) External Auditors

38. Heads of State and Government expressed their satisfaction with the performance of the firm of auditors Akintola Williams & Company as the External Auditors of the Community and renewed its mandate for a third and final two-year term, with retroactive effect from August 1996.

FREQUENCY OF SUMMIT MEETINGS

39. In order to enhance regional integration efforts and ensure a better monitoring of the Community's activities, the Authority decided that henceforth its meetings should be held twice yearly. One of the meetings will be held at the Headquarters of the Community and the second by turns in the other Member States.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

40. Heads of State and Government unanimously elected the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Chairman of the Community for the 1997-1998 period.

DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT SUMMIT

41. At the invitation of the Head of State of the Federal Republic of NIGERIA, the Authority decided to hold its twenty-first session at Abuja in July 1998.

VOTE OF THANKS

42. Heads of State and Government expressed sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Chairman of the Authority, His Excellency General Sani Abacha, Head of

State, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic o Nigeria for the exemplary leadership he has consistently provided in the promotior of West African integration. General Abacha was particularly commended for the personal concern he showed over the Liberian crisis and the invaluable political, financial, human and material assistance that Nigeria extended over the past seven years in support of the successful ECOWAS peace plan for Liberia.

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