

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

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF  
WEST AFRICAN STATES**

**ECW/HSG/XIX/**

**NINETEENTH SESSION  
OF THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT  
ABUJA, 26 - 27 JULY 1996**

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

**ABUJA, JULY 1996**

The Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 26 and 27 July 1996 under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Flight-Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana.

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,  
Head of State, Head of Government

His Excellency Blaise Compaoré  
President of Faso,  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers,

His Excellency Henri Konan Bédié  
President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

His Excellency Captain Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh  
Chairman of the Armed Forces Provisional  
Ruling Council (AFPRC), and  
Head of State of the Republic of The Gambia,

His Excellency Flt.-Lt. Jerry John Rawlings  
President of the Republic of Ghana,

His Excellency Professor Wilton Sankawulo  
Chairman of the Council of State of  
the Liberia National Transitional Government,

His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konaré  
President, Head of State of the Republic of Mali,

His Excellency Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré  
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 Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah  
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

His Excellency Gnassingbé Eyadéma  
President of the Togolese Republic,

Honourable Carlos Alberto Wahanon de Carvalho Veiga  
Prime Minister and Head of Government  
of the Republic of Cabo Verde,

Honourable Sidya Touré  
Prime Minister, Minister of Economy,  
Finance and Planning of Guinea  
representing the President of the Republic of Guinea

Honourable Luis Oliveira Sanca  
Minister of Trade of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau  
representing the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

Honourable Ahmed Ould Minih  
Minister, Secretary-General  
Office of the President  
representing the President of the Islamic  
Republic of Mauritania,

Honourable Massokhna Kane  
Minister of African Economic Integration  
Head of the Senegalese Delegation  
representing the President of the Republic  
of Senegal

3. Attending the Session as observers were:

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

The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organisation  
(WMO)

The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Liberia,

The Vice-President of the African Development Bank (ADB),

The Assistant Director-General, Regional Representative for Africa of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

The Deputy Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

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

The President of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce (FWACC),

The President of the West African Road Transporters Union (UTRAO)

The Secretary-General of the West African Women's Association (WAWA),

The Executive Director of the West African Health Community (WAHC),

The representative of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA),

The representative of the Governor of BCEAO,

The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

The representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

The representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO),

The representative of the United Nations Fund for Women in Development (UNIFEM)

The representative of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA),

The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),

The representative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD),

The representative of the West African Development Bank (BOAD),

The representative of ECOBANK Transnational Incorporated,

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

#### **Evaluation of the West African Economic Environment**

4. Against the background of the estimated growth rate of 3.7% of the global economy in 1995, the Heads of State and Government expressed satisfaction with the performance of the West African economy during the past year. The Authority was particularly satisfied that the better performance recorded was attributable in part to the economic reforms that Member States had been undertaking over the years. Heads of State and Government therefore urged Member States to sustain the momentum of their economic reforms. The Executive Secretary was called upon to intensify the contribution of the Community to the economic liberalisation programmes of Member States.

5. Heads of State and Government discussed at length the debt service obligations of Member States and the ever-increasing size of their external debts. While welcoming the definite progress made during the year about the possibility of subjecting multilateral debts of developing countries to a favourable treatment, the Authority expressed disappointment at the outcome of the recent Lyon meeting of the Group of 7. The Authority made a strong appeal to the creditor countries for unqualified support for the World Bank's debt initiative for the heavily indebted less developed countries.

### **Priority attention to regional integration programmes**

6. Heads of State and Government reviewed the West African integration process and the very modest achievements of ECOWAS. The Authority affirmed its conviction that the success of economic development in Member States depended on regional integration and committed itself to give priority attention to the regional integration process. The Authority stressed the need for an effective implementation of the ECOWAS Minimum Agenda for Action, to ensure the free movement of Community citizens throughout the region. To this end, the Authority urged all Member States to show greater commitment to the implementation of this important Community programme. The Authority decided to focus attention on the other Community programmes as follows:

7. Community levy: The Authority expressed deep concern at the high arrears of financial contributions owed by Member States to the different budgets of the Community institutions. In order to provide the institutions with an autonomous source of funds, the Authority adopted the protocol on conditions governing application of the Community levy. The protocol imposes a 0.5% tax on the value of imports from third countries. The Authority appealed to all Member States to ratify the protocol on the Community levy before 31 December 1996 and to commence its application on 1st January 1997.

8. Protocol instituting the Value Added Tax: The Authority stressed the need to introduce within the Community, a uniform indirect tax which would encourage increased intra-Community trade on a non-discriminatory basis. Heads of State and Government therefore decided to establish value added tax in Member States, as part of measures leading to the harmonisation of indirect taxation. To this end, the Authority adopted the protocol instituting within ECOWAS Member States, a consumer tax known as "value-added tax" which replaces the other indirect taxes on turnover.

9. Harmonisation of economic policies of Member States: The Heads of State and Government welcomed the increasing role being played by the ECOWAS Consultative Forum of Ministers of Finance and Planning and Governors in the harmonisation of national economic policies. The Authority endorsed the Council decision on the limitation of government borrowing from the central bank to 0-10% of fiscal revenue or 2-3% of GDP. The Authority directed the Executive Secretary to expedite action on the harmonisation of these policies and the formulation of a regional development programme. The Authority called on the relevant international institutions to continue giving support to these ECOWAS initiatives.

10. Trade Liberalisation Scheme: The Authority took note of the fact that the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme had got off to a slow but encouraging start. In order to accelerate implementation of the scheme and encourage direct foreign investment in the region, it was decided that the 25% minimum indigenous participation in the equity capital of companies should be removed as a condition for eligibility under the scheme.

11. The Authority also decided, for practical reasons, and bearing in mind the various fiscal reforms introduced in Member States, that the rates transcribed into the ECOWAS Harmonised System should be used as the base rates for the commencement of the tariff programme.

12. Second ECOWAS Trade Fair at Accra in 1999: The Authority endorsed the decision of Council to organise the second ECOWAS trade fair at Accra from 26 February to 7 March 1999 on the theme "Economic cooperation through trade". The Authority directed the Executive Secretary to ensure the effective preparation of the proposed fair by involving Member States, the different private sector organisations, and the appropriate international organisations and institutions.

13. ECOWAS Statistics Policy: The Heads of State and Government adopted an ECOWAS Statistics Policy to facilitate the accelerated development of statistics in Member States. The Executive Secretary was directed to work closely with the ECA, the United Nations Statistics Department and

other appropriate international agencies in the implementation of the ECOWAS Statistics Policy.

14. Regional food security: The Heads of State and Government reviewed the current situation of agricultural development and environmental protection within the region. The Authority directed the Executive Secretary to expedite action on the formulation of a regional food security programme. The Authority welcomed the Council decision to adopt the following projects:

Integrated Information Programme for the Agricultural Development of West Africa;

Regional Floating Weeds Control Projects; and

Regional Meteorological Project.

15. The Authority noted with satisfaction the interest that international organisations have been showing in these projects. The Authority directed the Executive Secretary to continue to work closely with the African Development Bank, the World Meteorological Organisation and the European Union, and encourage their contribution to the financing of these projects. The Authority urged Member States to participate in the proposed World Food Summit conference in Rome in November 1996.

#### **Involvement of the Private Sector and Women in the integration process**

16. The Heads of State and Government expressed their commitment to the promotion of the private sector and urged all Member States to continue the implementation of the relevant policies. The Authority agreed that a coordinated approach at the regional level would enhance the chances of success. The Authority therefore directed the Executive Secretary to take specific measures to promote the participation of the private sector in the regional integration process.



17. Considering the particular role played by women in the socio-economic sector, especially in education, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade, the Authority decided to support the activities of the West African Women's Association aimed at ensuring greater involvement of women in development.

#### **Political liberalisation in West Africa**

18. The Heads of State and Government, recalling the Declaration of ECOWAS Political Principles, reviewed the political liberalisation process in West Africa. The Authority expressed satisfaction with the steady progress that is being made and, particularly, the peaceful change of government through the electoral process in a number of Member States. The Authority stressed the importance of promoting the establishment of national democratic institutions and political education geared towards fostering popular participation in the political process. The Authority reaffirmed its commitment to the transformation of West Africa into a region of strong democratic principles and practices.

19. The Authority took due note of the cases during the year where the expression of political aspiration led to the disruption of normal social life and political strife. The Authority deplored the incidence of political violence and urged Member States not to accept such developments as a normal occurrence in the democratisation process. To this end, the Authority called upon the political class in each Member State to imbibe and practice the principles of tolerance and accommodation, accountability and transparency, integrity and statesmanship.

#### **Regional peace and security**

20. The Heads of State and Government reviewed the Liberian crisis within the context of regional peace and security. The Authority lauded the patient and persistent efforts of its Chairman and the Committee of Nine at the implementation of the ECOWAS peace plan for Liberia. Heads of State and Government expressed regrets that the hopes raised by the Abuja Agreement in August 1995 were dashed through the failure of the leaders of the Liberian

warring factions to honour their pledge to submit their troops to disarmament and demobilisation.

21. The Authority condemned the outbreak in April 1996 of hostilities in Monrovia, which involved all the warring factions, thus ending the ceasefire and depriving the city of Monrovia of its safe haven status. Heads of State and Government deplored the loss of life and property, the reign of terror while the fighting lasted, and above all the severe blow to the peace process. The Authority praised the ECOMOG Field Commander and his forces for ending the mayhem and re-establishing Monrovia as a safe haven and relative calm to Liberia. Particular mention was made of the Accra Mechanism which seeks a return to the implementation of the Abuja Agreement.

22. Heads of State and Government authorised the Executive Secretary to sign the status of ECOMOG forces agreement between ECOWAS and the government of Liberia, once the Council of State has been restructured.

23. Heads of State and Government took note of the increased interest that the international community has been taking in recent months in the Liberian civil war. The Authority noted the establishment of the Contact Group on Liberia at the initiative of the United States government. The Authority expressed its appreciation for the pledges so far made by Western governments of support to ECOMOG operations and humanitarian aspects of the Liberia peace process and urged the redemption of the pledges.

24. Heads of State and Government requested that a meeting of the Committee of Nine should be convened by the new Chairman of the Authority not later than 18 August 1996 to consider the various issues on the Liberian peace process as contained in the Abuja Agreement.

#### **Drug control**

25. Heads of State and Government expressed grave concern over the increase in drug trafficking, and the attendant rise in the crime rate, the

upsurge in the use of psychotropic substances within the region and the resultant negative effects on the youth.

26. Responding to the invitation of the government of the Republic of Cabo Verde, the Authority decided that a ministerial meeting be held in Praia during the first quarter of 1997, to discuss the issue in all its ramifications.

#### **The situation in Burundi**

27. Heads of State and Government expressed grave concern at the recent developments in the Republic of Burundi. The Authority made an urgent appeal to all the parties involved to exercise moderation in the interest of the people of Burundi.

#### **Election of Chairman**

28. Heads of State and Government unanimously elected the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Chairman of the Community for 1996-1997.

#### **Date and Venue of Next Summit**

29. At the invitation of the Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Authority decided to hold its twentieth session in Abuja, at a date to be determined later.

#### **Vote of Thanks**

30. Heads of State and Government paid glowing tribute to His Excellency Flight-Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana, for the diligence and dedication with which he directed the affairs of the Community during the past two years. The Authority was particularly appreciative of the untiring efforts of its out-going Chairman to secure peace in Liberia.

31. Heads of State and Government further expressed gratitude to His Excellency General Sani Abacha, Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, his government and the people of Nigeria for the genuine fraternal welcome extended to all delegations and for the excellent facilities made available to ensure the success of the 1996 Annual Statutory Meetings of the Community.

32. The Authority expressed its deep appreciation of the generous offer of an interest-free loan by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Community for the construction of residential accommodation in Abuja for the staff of the Executive Secretariat.

DONE AT ABUJA THIS 27TH DAY OF JULY 1996