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AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
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COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE
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SEVENTY-THIRD ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Abuja, 9th – 11th December, 2014

FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS Commission
Abuja, December, 2014

INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventy-Third Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers was held from 9th to 11th December, 2014 in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria. The meeting, which was attended by Ministers in-charge of ECOWAS Affairs and Finance, was chaired by H.E. Honourable Hanna Serwaa Tetteh (Ms.), Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana and Chairperson of Council.

2. The following Member States were represented:

- Republic of Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Republic of Cabo Verde
- Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
- Republic of The Gambia
- Republic of Ghana
- Republic of Guinea
- Republic of Guinea Bissau
- Republic of Liberia
- Republic of Mali
- Republic of Niger
- Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Republic of Senegal
- Republic of Sierra Leone
- Togolese Republic

3. The following institutions and specialized agencies of ECOWAS were also represented:

- ECOWAS Commission;
- ECOWAS Parliament;
- Community Court of Justice;
- West African Health Organisation (WAHO);
- Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA);
- ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE);
- ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Agency (ERERA);
- West African Power Pool (WAPP);
- ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID;
- West African Monetary Institute (WAMI);

- West African Monetary Agency (WAMA);
- Office of the Financial Controller.

4. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

5. In her opening statement the Chairperson of Council, Honourable Hanna Serwaah Tetteh (Ms), welcomed all participants to the 73rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers. On behalf of Council, she expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Nigeria for their warm welcome and commended the ECOWAS Commission for the excellent facilities put at their disposal to facilitate their work.

6. Referring to Peace and Development as the heart of the integration process, she expressed delight in the notable progress made in the sub-region in addressing political and security challenges since January 2014. In this regard, she recalled the political situation in Burkina Faso, and commended, on behalf of Council, the leaders and people of the country for the political maturity and sense of responsibility displayed in the face of recent tensions over the planned amendment of the Constitution. She welcomed the restoration of civilian rule and congratulated His Excellency Michel Kafando as Burkina Faso's interim President and Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Zida as transitional Prime Minister to lead the country until elections in November 2015.

7. The Chairperson then gave an overview of the expected positive economic situation in 2015 and the negative impact on the sub-region, of the Ebola Virus Disease, drug trafficking, terrorism and the challenges posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and bordering countries. In this regard, she urged Council not to allow these threats to continue to be a major risk to economic growth and stability and the much needed investment in socio-economic and infrastructure development in the sub region.

8. Referring specifically to the threat of the Ebola Virus Disease, she stated that it should be considered as a critical development issue with far reaching short, medium and long term social and economic implications for the affected countries and the continent as a whole.

9. In this regard she recalled the Extraordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held in Accra on 6th November, 2014, which culminated in the endorsement of the Regional Integrated Operational Plan for Response to the Ebola Virus Disease.

10. With regard to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and infrastructure development the Chairperson highlighted the strides made respectively on market access and the implementation of the ECOWAS Joint Border Post Programme among others.

11. She further highlighted the implementation of emergency programmes for electrical power supply to The Gambia, Mali and Sierra Leone, amounting to US$ 108 million, as well as the efforts to promote regional economic integration, consolidate the common market, harmonize trade policies and fully implement the trade liberalization scheme.

12. In conclusion, the Chairperson solicited Council's cooperation in critically and selflessly scrutinizing the documents before them while also heeding to the recommendations presented by the Administration and Finance Committee to enable them make informed decisions for the development of the Community.

13. On that note she thanked them for their attention, declared the 73rd Session of the Council of Ministers, open and wished them fruitful and constructive deliberations.

14. In his welcome statement, the Commission President, H.E. Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, on behalf of all participants, expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded them, as well as for the excellent facilities put at their disposal to ensure a successful conduct of the deliberations.

15. Raising the issue of the Ebola Virus Disease, he strongly commended the solidarity and spirit of sacrifice of the Heads of State and Government in the fight against the disease.

16. Regarding the political situation in Burkina Faso, the Commission President paid tribute to the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government led by the current Chairman, H.E. Mr. John Dramani Mahama, for their personal contribution to the advent of the transition in the wake of the events of 30 and 31 October 2014.

17. He welcomed the results achieved by the joint ECOWAS-AU-UN mission dispatched to Ouagadougou on the initiative of the current Chairman of the Authority. In that regard, he expressed sincere appreciation to the African Union Commission President and the United Nations Secretary General for their support.

18. Furthermore, the President paid tribute to all sections of the Burkinabe people, as well as its political class and the Burkinabe armed and security forces for the high degree of maturity they demonstrated during the past weeks.

19. He also expressed heartfelt congratulations to H.E. Mr. Michel Kafando for his election to the Presidency of Faso and his encouragement to all transitional authorities. He assured them of the Commission's unflinching determination to support them in their important mission of leading the country to the November 2015 general elections.

20. Regarding the progress made in economic integration, the Commission President recalled the completion of the construction of the joint border posts between Ghana and Togo and the commencement of the construction works on the joint border posts between Benin and Nigeria. He underscored the importance of these posts in ensuring effective free movement of persons and goods as well as implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) due to come into force on 1st January 2015.

21. Lastly, outlining the challenges in the implementation of the regional agenda, the Commission President indicated that the Commission will make further efforts in 2015 to improve the status of the Community Levy lodgement, while stressing that the success of these efforts will depend, in large part, on strict adherence to the provisions of the relevant Protocols by the Member States.

22. On this note, he expressed his ardent desire for this Council session to be successful beyond all expectations.

23. The full texts of the speeches are attached to this report.

II. ELECTION OF BUREAU

24. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairman - Republic of Ghana
- Rapporteurs - Republic of Guinea
  - Republic of Guinea Bissau
  - Federal Republic of Nigeria

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

25. The following agenda was adopted:

- **OPENING CEREMONY**

a) Welcome Address by the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers;

b) Statement by H.E. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, President of the ECOWAS Commission;

c) Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme;

d) Election of Bureau;

- **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

a) Presentation and Consideration of the 2014 Annual Report of the President of the Commission;

b) Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 72nd Ordinary Session of Council;

c) Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2014 Interim Report;

d) Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 16th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;
e) Presentation and Consideration of the Phase 1 Report of the Consultants, Maxwell Stamp on Institutional Reforms;

f) Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 46th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

- **ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT**

a) Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Finance on ECOWAS Common External Tariff (C.E.T.);

b) Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in Charge of Higher Education and Scientific Research;

c) Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Health;

d) Report of the ECOWAS Heads of Immigration on the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card;

e) Report on the Regional Strategic Framework for ECOWAS Private Sector Development;

- **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a) Memorandum on Investment Guarantee Mechanism

- Any Other Business
- Adoption of Report
- Vote of Thanks
- Closing Ceremony

IV. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

Items for Decision

Item 4: Presentation and Consideration of the 2014 Annual Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission

26. The 2014 Annual Report was presented by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo. In his presentation, he noted that the global economy would increase slightly to 3.3% in 2014 from a growth rate of 3.0% in 2013. This

increase would be driven by growth in emerging and developing economies which are expected to experience a growth rate of 4.4% in 2014 compared to 4.7% in 2013.

27. He informed Council that growth forecast in Africa looks positive with economic activity expected to expand by 5.3% in 2014 compared to 4.8% in 2013. The ECOWAS region continues to be the most dynamic Regional Economic Community in Africa with expected growth rate of 6.3 % in 2014. With a rate of 9.1%, Cote d'Ivoire is expected to record the highest growth rate in the region. Four other countries, namely, The Gambia (7.5%), Ghana (6.9%), Mali (6.5%) and Niger (6.3%), are expected to record growth rates same as or exceeding the regional average growth rate of 6.3%. The main sources of growth are high demand for the region's raw materials, good agricultural production and increase in public infrastructure expenditure. The presentation also noted the effect of the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease on the economies of the three hardest hit countries. Growth prospects of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have been revised downwards: from 4.5% to 0.5% in Guinea; 5.9% to 2.2% in Liberia; and 11.1% to 4.0% in Sierra Leone. The hardest hit sectors by the epidemic are health, agriculture, mining, services and education.

28. Concerning the implementation of the Community Work Programme, the President highlighted the progress made during the year and noted that the achievements recorded reaffirmed the commitment of the leadership of the Community Institutions to the integration and development agenda of the region.

29. On economic and monetary integration, he highlighted the efforts made toward the establishment of a credible and sustainable single monetary zone in the region through the revision of the Roadmap on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme and the macroeconomic convergence criteria as well as rationalization of the functions of institutions involved in the implementation of the single currency programme.

30. Regarding the establishment of the customs union, the President informed Council on the completion of all necessary activities for the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) in all Member States from 1st January 2015, completion of the drafting of the ECOWAS Community Customs Code and the adoption of the steering and monitoring mechanism for the ECOWAS Fiscal Transition programme.

31. With respect to the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), he informed Council on the adoption of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and ECOWAS by the Authority of Heads of State and Government on July 10, 2014 in Accra and the initialing of consensus text of the EPA by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions.

32. On Free Movement of Goods and Persons, the President noted the adoption by the Authority in July 2014 of a draft Supplementary Act on the introduction of ECOWAS biometric identity card and the abolition of residence permit. He also made a comprehensive presentation on initiatives related to infrastructure development in the region and noted, in particular, the signing of a treaty by the Presidents of Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo relating to the construction of the Lagos – Abidjan

Highway in Yamoussoukro in March 2014; re-launch of construction works and ground-breaking ceremony of the Seme Joint Border Post between Benin and Nigeria on 24 October 2014; and the completion of the Noepe Joint Border Post (JBP) between Ghana and Togo on 3rd November 2014. He also noted progress made in the development of railway and air transport as well as in the energy and telecommunications sectors in the region.

33. Moreover, the President gave a comprehensive report on the political and security situation in the region, particularly recent events in Burkina Faso and developments in Guinea Bissau and Mali as well as the parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for 2015.

34. In addition, the President applauded the dynamic growth of the West African economy with positive growth prospects despite the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease, finalization of the negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU and the gradual consolidation of democratic processes in the region. He also noted key risks that tend to undermine the region's progress towards stability, peace and prosperity. The constraints include the spread of the Ebola epidemic, Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, terrorist attacks in Mali and non-compliance with the provisions of the Community Levy Protocol.

35. In conclusion, he recommended, among others, that member States should contribute to or fulfill their pledges to the ECOWAS Solidarity Fund for the Fight against Ebola, comply fully with the provisions of the Community Levy Protocol, deepen regional integration initiatives, and consolidate peace and security in the region.

36. Following the presentation, Council lauded the quality of the annual report and commended the Commission for the actions undertaken including measures put in place to contain and eradicate the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease epidemic. Council also welcomed the solidarity demonstrated particularly through the visits of the Chairman of Authority and the President of the ECOWAS Commission to the three most affected countries. Council recommended the establishment of a Regional Centre for Diseases Control. Council further recommended that ECOWAS should take relevant measures to assist in the lifting of flight restrictions to Ebola affected Member States in the sub-region. Council welcomed the Commission's efforts in the resolution of political and security crises in the region and reiterated the need for greater solidarity within the region.

37. The Council recalled the importance of community resources in the implementation of ECOWAS programmes. In this regard, Council launched an appeal to all Member States to fully comply with the Community Levy Protocol.

38. As far as the establishment of the customs union and the conclusion of the EPA are concened, Council also underpinned the need to ensure an enhanced popularization of the Community Development Programme (CDP) which purports to provide a response to the development challenge, especially the problem of youth employment.

39. Finally, Council endorsed the 2014 Annual Report and the recommendations contained therein for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 72nd Ordinary Session of Council

40. The Commission presented an implementation status report on the tasks assigned to the ECOWAS Community Institutions by the Council of Ministers at its 72nd Ordinary Session held in Accra from 19th to 20th June, 2014. The report covered the seventeen (17) key areas as follows:

a) There is need for the recapitalisation of the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID). In this regard Council directed the Commission to work with EBID and make specific recommendations to Council at its next session;

b) There is need for the abolition of Resident Permits and an introduction of an ECOWAS Biometric ID Card to improve on Free Movement of Goods and Persons;

c) The low level of Intraregional Trade is a cause for concern especially in the light of the Customs Union that takes effect from January, 2015. In this regard, Intraregional Trade needs to be further developed;

d) Council directed the Commission to follow-up with Member States with a view to ensuring compliance with the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol;

e) There is need for greater cooperation and coordination in respect of security matters with a view to developing a mechanism to access funds to improve on security in the sub-region;

f) Council directed the Commission to find ways and means within the administrative framework of the Commission to deal with the issues of enhancing internal security without creating a new directorate;

g) ECOWAS Commission should develop a concrete action plan with performance indicators for the realisation of the various Community objectives;

h) Council also expressed grave concern about the issue of expenditure being incurred by the ECOWAS Parliament without vetting by the Office of the Financial Controller as required by extant Community Regulations. In this

connection, Council directed the Commission to look into the issue and report back to Council at its next Session;

i) The posts of Secretary-General and Director of Admin & Finance (DAF) are occupied by officers in acting capacity whereas the Director of Parliamentary Affairs is on contract appointment. In order to comply with the Staff Regulations, and considering the high level of responsibility assigned to the positions and the inherent risk to the Institution, it is strongly recommended that in liaison with the President of the Commission, Parliament takes necessary steps for the appointment of substantive officers to these management positions without further delay;

j) Council noted the comments on the representation of Member States in the Commission and the discrepancy in the figures relating to staff presented by the AFC and the Financial Controller and directed the Commission to provide the exact figures to Council at its next session;

k) Council stressed the need to determine the criteria for Member States' representation in ECOWAS Institutions and to find ways and means to improving the visibility of least represented Member States;

l) Parliament should make concrete proposals for the Enhancement of Powers of the Parliament both in terms of financial implications and relationships with other Institutions and resubmit same to Council through the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) at its next session for a final decision;

m) Parliament is urged to use the software to its full capacity. Furthermore, the Management is advised to consider recruiting dedicated staff to maintain the software as has been done by the ECOWAS Commission and Court of Justice ;

n) A review of the Parliament's financial documents revealed that some of the Parliament's bank accounts were overdrawn at some point during the year 2013. The Management of the Parliament is urged to step up measures to improve planning and monitoring of the institution's treasury through periodic reporting as prescribed in Article 99 of the Manual of Accounting Procedures. The management of the Parliament is therefore encouraged to invest the idle funds as prescribed in Article 65 of the Manual of Accounting Procedures in order to optimize income from other sources and reduce the burden on Community resources ;

o) The Parliament is also reminded to furnish the Office of the Financial Controller with the MOU and other relevant documents as well as follow due process in the award of the contract before committing and disbursing the grant received from the Nigerian Government

p) As for the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), according to the funding agreements signed with them, all recipients of financial assistance from WAHO must submit programmatic and financial reports for the use of funds they received. This was not being complied with. And the non-compliance poses a daunting challenge that requires immediate and vigorous attention. The Management of WAHO is invited to quickly institute a mechanism for the monitoring of all funding agreements, drawn to support ECOWAS member states and other beneficiaries, in keeping with the relevant provision of the Financial Regulations;

q) Concerning the budget implementation in the GIABA, the period under review revealed that the Controller and the Authorizing Officer (DG) did not authorize expenses incurred for a total sum of UA 1,136,646, which is in violation of articles 18 and 21 of the ECOWAS Financial Regulations. In addition, for the 2013 plenary meetings of GIABA in Cotonou, two payments were made: A sum of CFA 67,880,910 disbursed without the endorsement of the Controller and payment of CFA 100,000,000 made in advance to SATGURU Agency to cover expenses for the plenary had only been partially accounted for to date. It is strongly recommended that GIABA should adhere strictly to provisions set out in the Financial Regulations relating to the vetting of Commitment Orders and Payment Vouchers as well as justification and reimbursement of advances;

41. After presentation, Council took note of the report and urged the Commission to complete those tasks that were still pending.

Item 6: Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2014 Interim Report

42. The 2014 Interim Report of the Financial Controller was presented to Council and the report covered the budgetary, financial and staffing situation of the community institutions for the period 1st January to 30th June, 2014. The interim report recalled that the Council of Ministers at its Seventy-First Ordinary Session, approved a total budget of UA 410 million for Community Institutions and special operations and interventions in Member States for the year 2014. The main budget components are as follows: Institutions, Agencies and Offices, UA 196 million; Statutory Obligations, UA 10.1 million; Interventions in Member States UA 129.1 million; Regional Peace and Security, UA 46.5 million; SAP UA 7.8 million and Contingencies UA 8.7 million.

43. Council was informed that the budget was to be funded from the following sources: Current year Community Levy Proceeds of UA 190.5 million, Community Levy Arrears of UA 195.2 million, Contribution Arrears from Member States of UA 5 million; donor funds of UA 19.2 million and miscellaneous income of UA 0.2 million. With this structure, about 95% of community budget is funded from own resources and 5% from the donor contributions.

44. Half way through the year 2014, only UA 74.6 million or 18% of budgeted income for the entire year was realised. Current year Community Levy yielded UA 73.5 million or 39% of budget, Donors UA 1.12 million or 6% and other income UA 2,743 million or 1%. No resources came in from Community Levy arrears nor Contribution arrears from Member States. The liquidity dearth confronting the Community is precarious, as there is no operational buffer, reserves nor fall-back funds.

45. A community-wide total expenditure of UA 55.7 million was made during the first half of the year. This total is composed of: Governing bodies UA 3.1 million, Administrative Expenses UA 24.8 million, Programme Expenses UA 24.9 million, Statutory Obligations UA 1.7 million, Intervention in Member States UA 0.4 million, whilst UA 0.1 million was spent on Peace & Security. Overall budget execution rate for the six-month period is 14%.

46. The Financial Controller stated that the Commission is implementing a System Application & Product (SAP) Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Software Project. This singular project is expected to confer additional credibility on data and information generated from the operations of the Community and at very fast pace so as to meet the 1st January, 2015 go-live target.

47. On the staffing situation, it was reported that during the period under review, the total staff strength in ECOWAS Institutions increased by five (5) staff, totalling One Thousand and Forty-Seven (1047). ECOWAS Commission had the highest number of staff of Six Hundred and Eighty-Nine followed by the Community Court of Justice with 127. The Community Parliament and the West African Health Organization (WAHO) each posted 83 staff whilst the GIABA posted 65 staff. As summarised in the report, locally recruited staff totalled 596. Permanent appointments totalled 638, representing 61%; whilst contract appointments stand at four hundred and nine (409), constituting 39%.

48. At the end of the report the under-listed three (3) general and four (4) specific recommendations were made for the consideration of the Council of Ministers;-

General Recommendations

I. The Community Levy remains the principal source of funding of ECOWAS activities and programme implementation. In this regard, the need for a uniform compliance with the Community Levy Protocol by Member States cannot be over-emphasized. Consequently, Council is strongly advised to take necessary and immediate measures to address the issue.

II. In view of the current paucity of funds to implement community programmes, Council needs to strongly urge Member States still in arrears of outstanding contributions to fully redeem their obligations within the stipulated deadline of December 2015.

III. Council is urged to consider granting special dispensation for the recruitment of critical and key staff, particularly at the Community Court of Justice, the Community

Parliament and the Office of the Financial Controller to strengthen their delivery capabilities as proposed in the 2015 budget (see attached list).

Specific Recommendations

I. The sourcing and utilization of donor funds by the Commission has been dismal. The challenges associated with funding of Community programmes, suggests a dire need for the Commission to give added attention to donor resource mobilization.

II. In line with best practice, the ECOWAS Commission should establish a uniform grade level and tenure for Heads of Agency and Representative Offices. At the end of their tenure, Heads of Agency and Representative Offices who are regular staff should be redeployed as appropriate.

III. There is an urgent need to implement the recommendations in the Financial Controller's 2012 Final Report adopted by Council in respect of special external audit on the financial operations of Community Parliament over the past 5 years. It is recommended that Council mandates the President of the Commission to appoint the external auditor immediately.

IV. The management of WAHO should accelerate the operationalization of guidelines for monitoring all financing agreements. In this regard, additional financial assistance should not be given to beneficiaries who failed to satisfy the terms and conditions of previous agreements with WAHO.

49. During deliberations, members generally expressed concerns about the poor implementation of the Community Levy Protocol by Member States and pledged severally to improve on its implementation by honoring their commitments relating to arrears and contributions.

50. Council further endorsed the recommendations contained in the report and specifically took the following decisions:

- There should be a meeting of all stakeholders on the Community Levy to find concrete ways and means of improving on the implementation of the Protocol;

- The Commission should ensure uniformity in the products that are subject to the Community Levy;

- With regard to the Court of Justice, Community Parliament and the Office of the Financial Controller, Council approved the recruitment of critical staff as highlighted in the report of the Financial Controller. It further endorsed the recruitment of critical staff for the new departments of the Commission (see proposal list attached).

51. After clarifications provided on the issues raised during deliberations, Council adopted the report.

Item 7: Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 16th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

52. The final report of the 16th meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by Mrs. Sena Siaw-Boateng, Chairman of the Committee. The report dealt mainly with the following issues:

- Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions;
- 2014 Interim Report of the Financial Controller;
- Implementation Status of the Community Levy Protocol;
- Memorandum of the Financial Situation of the Community;
- Presentation of Budget Performance for January to August, 2014 and Brief on the 2015 Consolidated Budget;
- Consideration of the 2015 Budgets of ECOWAS Institutions;
- Memorandum on Amendments to the ECOWAS Tender Code;
- Guiding Principles for the Provision of Technical Assistance to Member States;
- Request for securing a budget to strengthen WAHO's Capacity to respond to epidemic outbreaks in ECOWAS member Countries;
- Memorandum on a Special Budget for Electoral Assistance to Member States Organizing Presidential & General Elections in 2015: Nigeria, Togo, Guinea, Cote D' Ivoire and Burkina Faso;
- Memorandum on a Special Budget for the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB) for 2015;
- Memorandum on the Enhancement of the Powers of the Parliament;
- Revised Composition of the Board of Trustees of the ECOWAS Staff Joint Pension Fund.

53. After extensive deliberations, Council adopted the Report and all the recommendations contained therein subject to the following amendments:-

- The recommendation on the extension of the number of days for AFC meetings was not accepted;

- Expenses relating to ECOMIB should be catered for in the Community's Budget, especially through the CL. External contributions should equally be sought.

Item 8: Presentation and Consideration of the Phase 1 Report of the Consultants, Maxwell Stamp on Institutional Reforms

54. The Consultants briefed Members of Council on the main recommendations of the Phase 1 report highlighting two main phases, namely, the Transition phase of one year (April 2014 to April 2015) which modifies the present organogram and a Transformation phase of 4 years from April 2015 to 2018 which modifies organisation structures further and also building on the transition phase and including important adjustments to the Governance structure.

55. On the Transition phase, the following actions were proposed:

i. ACTION 1: Adjust the portfolios and responsibilities of the 13 Commissioners based on compatibility and affinity;

ii. ACTION 2: Create some new roles at the Commission to improve efficiency and effectiveness;

iii. ACTION 3: Re-group the specialised management services at the Commission;

iv. ACTION 4: Establish two new institutions – an Auditor-General and a Customer Service Centre – which will strengthen oversight and improve service to Member States;

v. ACTION 5: Roll-out a new network of 15 Country Resident Representative Offices that act as a multi-functional liaison with Member States;

vi. ACTION 6: Re-absorb all today's five agencies into the Commission;

vii. ACTION 7: Fine-tune centralised responsibilities at the Commission and de-centralised responsibilities at institutions;

viii. ACTION 8: Adjust the organisation structure within existing institutions;

ix. ACTION 9: Create an in-house IT department and a top level IT Leadership group;

x. ACTION 10: Prepare a staff re-appointment process and begin to adjust the relative balance of G and P staff;

xi. ACTION 11: Conduct an interim resource enhancing and cost reduction campaign;

xii. ACTION 12: Create a pilot example of a new office environment.

56. The Consultants further informed Council that the Transformation phase comprised three key components as follows:-

- Institutional Architecture;
- Governance;
- Commission Organogram.

57. Council also took note of the comments provided by the Commission on the Report of the Consultants.

58. During its deliberations, Council raised concerns especially over the size of the proposed structure, the related costs, the lack of coherence and link between the reforms envisaged and the mandate, and the ECOWAS vision and integration projects. While reiterating the relevance of the reform, Council underscored the importance of enhancing the Commission's powers to improve its functioning and effectiveness. Council instructed the Commission and the Consultants to take due account of the enhancement in the study.

59. Following extensive deliberations, Council decided as follows:

i. There was need for additional consultation between Consultants, the ECOWAS Commission and other ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies with a view to further clarifying and agreeing on the proposed structures and other recommendations;

ii. There was need for extension of the consultancy agreement with the Consultants by the ECOWAS Commission for another period of approximately six (6) months to enable them finalize the report;

60. In that regard,

- The Consultants and Commission should further look at some of the recommendations made especially those in respect of moving the various Agencies from their various locations to the Commission in Abuja;#

- Les consultants et la Commission doivent tenir compte des recommandations faites par les Etats membres selon lesquels les Représentants Permanents doivent jouer un rôle beaucoup plus actif et être les intermédiaires entre la Commission et le Conseil des Ministres tel que proposé dans l'organigramme ;

- The Consultants and the Commission should also take due account of the role of National Units in the restructuring;

- The Commission should equally examine the relevant Protocols and indicate to Council whether or not it is necessary to make amendments to take account of the recommendations set out in the report.

61. The final report should then be submitted to Council's next session.

Item 9: Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 46th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

62. The President of the Commission presented the draft agenda of 46th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

63. After amendments, Council adopted the draft agenda annexed to this report.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

Item 10: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Finance on ECOWAS Common External Tariff (C.E.T.)

64. In his presentation, the Minister of Finance of Ghana, Mr. Seth Emmanuel Terkper recalled the instructions of the Extraordinary Summit held in Dakar on 25 October 2013, relating to the application of the ECOWAS CET in all the Member States on 1st January 2015.

65. In this regard, the Minister informed Council that meetings of Directors-General of Customs and ECOWAS Ministers of Finance were held on 15 January 2014 in Ouagadougou and 27 November 2014 in Accra respectively.

66. He specified that the last meeting led to the conclusion that:
   a. The Member States and the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions were ready for the implementation of the ECOWAS CET on 1st January 2015 in spite of initial challenges at the very beginning;

   b. The regulation on Supplementary Protection Measures provides a window of flexibility to Member States to adjust to the CET by taking due account of two conditions:
      - a maximum of 3% derogation on tariff lines in relation to the CET, and
      - Cumulation of taxes not exceeding 70%;

67. The meeting also made the following recommendations:

a. Accelerate work on the Community Customs Code, the monitoring mechanism, the review of the Decision on the establishment of the Joint CET Management Committee to construct the Customs Union;
b. Organise by the end of 2014, a regional preparatory meeting for the renegotiation of bound tariffs at the WTO;
c. Adopt before the end of the 1st quarter of 2015, appropriate measures to ensure on the one hand, standard application of the CET and Supplementary Protection Measures and on the other hand, create appropriate arbitration channels backed by sanctions;
d. Member States should ensure full compliance with Community Protocols, in particular the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme.
e. The ECOWAS Commission has been directed to work with the World Bank and other partners with a view to widening the scope of the study to take into account smaller economies and landlocked countries as well as other activities required for the implementation of the CET.
f. Signature of a statement on the launch of the CET by the current Chair of the Authority

68. In conclusion, the Minister requested Council to adopt the conclusions and recommendations of the meetings of ECOWAS Ministers of Finance and Directors-General of Customs.

69. Council endorsed the report as presented and decided to submit it to the Authority of Heads of State and Government for adoption.

Item 11: Consideration of the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in Charge of Higher Education and Scientific Research

70. The Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana, Dr. Bernice Heloo, on behalf of the Minister of Education of Ghana presented the report of the ECOWAS Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In her presentation she indicated the following recommendations made on Higher Education and Scientific Research as well as Teacher Development for execution by ECOWAS Commission and Member States.

For ECOWAS Commission

Higher Education and Scientific Research:

i. Create Joint Research Centers to strengthen existing Universities and Research Centers currently under the auspices of ECOWAS, with emphasis on disciplines that meet the specific needs of research and development in the region at Masters and PhD Levels ;

ii- Create within the region, an academic mobility system for students and teachers (including diaspora) and encourage institution to put in place language

immersion programmes to promote mobility of students and teachers in the region;

iii- Establish a coordinating Unit on Higher Education at the ECOWAS Commission, taking into cognizance the mandate and wealth of experience of other existing structures and networks in Member States;

iv- Develop a document that outlines the regional strategy for the harmonization of Higher Education in the region, outlining the competencies for the various professions and academic qualifications as a major task of the regional coordinating unit when established;

v- Institute a regional award system to motivate best-performing higher education institutions and scholars in the area of quality of delivery, governance and research;

vi- (a) Carry out more sensitization on the African Union Pan African University and advocate for financial support to the Institute of Life and Earth Sciences (including Health and Agriculture) domiciled in the region (Ibadan) and urge Member States to host the Satellite Centres of the institutes;
(b) Commit to providing political and financial support to the Rectorate of PAU in a situation where it is located in the Region;
(c) Encourage Member States to host Satellite Centres of the PAU and advocate for courses such as Marine Law and Fisheries; Mathematics and Civil Engineering; Gender and other highly specialized courses;

vii- Assist in the enhancement of necessary infrastructure for virtual learning that can complement activities of the universities geared towards improving access and quality;

viii- Establish Regional Research Fund and encourage Member States to establish National Research Funds;

ix- Put in place a mechanism for following up political decisions at Regional level, preferably, appoint a champion at the level of Heads of State

Teacher Development

i. Conduct situational Analysis of teachers training, motivation and remuneration of teachers within the region;
ii. Encourage the Member States towards making the teaching profession attractive by providing adequate incentives such as awards, remuneration and involvement in decision making;
iii. Adopt continuous professional development through ODL towards solving the problem of dearth of teachers within the region;
iv. Efforts should be made to disseminate and popularize the PACTED Roadmap among all stake holders

v. Encourage Member States to develop holistic Teacher policy that would cover training, recruitment, deployment, management, continuous training and professional career development;

For Member States

Higher Education and Scientific Research

i. Confirm the specific targets allocation of one percent (1%) of GDP to research as recommended by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the then OAU held in Monrovia on the 20th of July 1979, for implementation by Member States by 2025;
   - Set target of 60% science with particular emphasis on studies of strategic importance to the region such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and; 40% arts and humanities including General History of Africa (GHA) in the curriculum of Member States;

ii. Efforts should be stepped up in all Member States to increase access to quality Higher Education through increase in the number of available spaces with the potential of ICT and Open and Distance Learning delivery systems tapped to the fullest;

iii. Assist Member States to mobilize the private sector in the delivery of Higher Education and to guide them on the content of studies of strategic importance to the region;

iv. Encouraged to embark on staff capacity building sessions to improve pedagogical, research, as well as administrative and financial skills;

v. Ratify and implement the revised ARUSHA Convention and ECOWAS protocol on Education / Training and on Equivalence of Certificates.

vi. Establish National Research Fund.

Teacher Development

i. Boost the morale of teachers through attractive remunerations and improved working conditions in order to retain and attract the best brains;

ii. Strengthen the capacities of teachers through continuous education;

iii. Device means of integrating cross-cutting contextual issues such as: culture of peace and security; climate change; environment; ICT; entrepreneurship; gender; emerging public health; and other key areas in to the school curriculum;

iv. Establish appropriate regulatory agency where not in existence to cater for professional standards, work ethics and discipline of teachers;

v. Domesticate the PACTED roadmap

71. After presentation, Council endorsed the report for adoption of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 12: Consideration of the Report of the Extraordinary Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Health

72. The Director General of the West African Health Organisation, Dr. Xavier Crespin, presented, on behalf of the Honourable Minister of Health of Ghana, the report of the meeting of the West African Ministers of Health held on 28th August, 2014, in Accra, Ghana. The objective of the meeting was to consider the experts' report on the current Ebola Virus Disease epidemic in West Africa.

73. In his presentation, he highlighted the Decisions and recommendations of the Ministers as follows:

1. To assist affected countries through:
   a. Mobilisation and deployment of human resources by providing health personnel to support the affected countries;
   b. Provision of materials and equipment;
2. Strengthening epidemiological surveillance at entry and exit points
   - Design of health record cards;
   - Temperature checks;
   - Use of hand sanitisers;
   - Handling of bodies
   - Identification of suspected cases and contact persons as well as their management (prohibition of movement within and outside countries)
   - Information sharing between countries
3. Strengthening of health facilities at country level through training and establishment of isolation centres;
4. Clear and consistent messages to the populations;
5. Provide financial support and encourage research and medical schools to actively contribute to global efforts in the quest for solutions, remedies and therapies with a view to preventing and controlling Ebola Virus Disease and other life threatening conditions;
6. Put in place regional monitoring mechanisms such as
   a. Ministerial Coordination Group
   b. Technical Surveillance Group;
7. The ECOWAS Assembly of Health Ministers call on the populations not to panic because it is only transmitted through direct contact with body liquids of patients or through the handling or consumption of bush meat;
8. The Assembly of Health Ministers call on airline companies to continue with the usual flights schedules within West Africa subject to such health measures as may be agreed with WAHO.
9. WAHO should submit a proposal within 7 days to the Ad-hoc Ministerial Committee for the implementation of these recommendations.

74. The Director-General of WAHO indicated that the Experts meeting made the following recommendations to the Authority of Heads of State:

- Establish humanitarian , health and economic corridors with affected countries;
- Asses Travel restriction measures and border closures in the light of WHO recommendations; open borders with checks should be the rule and closure the exception;
- Where borders need to be closed, for exceptional reasons, there should be consultation among member countries and the views of WAHO and WHO should be sought;
- Quickly make their contributions to the ECOWAS solidarity fund for disease control and call on the international community as well as the private sector to contribute.

75. After presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 13: Report of the ECOWAS Heads of Immigration on the Deployment of the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card

76. The Commission in its presentation on the report of the ECOWAS Heads of Immigration meeting, indicated that the need to propose a joint action plan on the deployment of the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card and removal of residence card requirements for migrants of ECOWAS extraction in territories of Member States, ensuring security of migrants, strengthening identity management through a coordinated approach in information exchange and data management in the context of securitised inter-regional mobility.

77. The Commission mentioned that the ECOWAS Heads of Immigration made the following fifteen (15) recommendations:-

- The roll-out of the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card would be piloted in 2016;
- In terms of colour of the ID card, it was recommended that all member States should have the same colour;
- New Biometric Identity Card to circulate alongside the national identity card in each Member State for a period of time till the biometric identity card is fully institutionalised within the set timeframe (2016);
- The Identity Card would replace the Travel Certificate;
- The countries whose Consulates were already engaged in census-taking of their nationals in ECOWAS host countries should be encouraged to continue enhancing their efforts, while others should take adequate measures to ensure enrolment of its nationals.

- Consular Immigration Attachés to forward information about their citizens domiciled in the ECOWAS host nation to immigration office in the Member State;
- Protection of data should be assured through the implementation of additional Acts of the Conference of Heads of State in 2010;
- Police, Customs and Immigration Services to exchange information quickly and reduce waiting time;
- The imperative of the removal of Residence Card requirements for ECOWAS citizens in Member States;
- The West African Police Information System (WAPIS) to collaborate with ECOWAS to create information sharing mechanism as an essential tool for law enforcement agencies in their efforts to secure the region with the establishment of the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card and ensure Identity Management in the region;
- Replicate the pilot project of Cote d'Ivoire, the monitoring system deployed and its experience and expertise in other ECOWAS Member States to ensure security of migrants and Member States territories;
- Replicate the WAPIS system which allows law enforcement agencies in ECOWAS Member States to share and manage data on criminals;
- Strengthen information system of States through the establishment of WAPIS. Recognise the importance of the full implementation of the WAPIS Program in all ECOWAS Member States to ensure security within ECOWAS free movement zone;
- Recommend for replication of WAPIS in Member States as an information system on criminals and setting up WAPIS in all ECOWAS Member States;
- Training of operatives at the frontiers on basic health procedures to reduce proliferation of agencies and bottlenecks at our borders.

78. After presentation, the Council endorsed the report for adoption by the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government.

Item 14: Report on the Regional Strategic Framework for ECOWAS Private Sector Development

79. In his presentation of the Regional Strategic Framework for ECOWAS Private Sector Development, the representative of Senegal recalled the 29th Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government directing the ECOWAS Commission to organize the Private Sector in the region and set an ECOWAS Business Council as an apex advisory organ on private sector development

80. The representative of Senegal then highlighted the various programmes and activities undertaken in the execution of this directive which culminated in the adoption of

the RS-PSD document validated on 7th March, 2013 and adopted by the Sectoral Ministers in Dakar, Senegal on 23rd October, 2013.

81. He further highlighted the essence of the Private Sector Development Strategy and the ECOWAS Business Council and requested the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to endorse the Report.

82. After presentation, Council endorsed the report for adoption by the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 15: Memorandum on Guaranteed Investment Mechanism

83. The Commission presented the report of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) on the establishment of a Guaranteed Investment Mechanism in the ECOWAS region. The purpose of this mechanism is to mitigate the risks faced by investors in the region.

84. Recalling Council directives on the setting up of a Project Implementation Committee (PIC) to work out the modalities for an ECOWAS – African Trade Insurance (ATI) partnership and to steer the implementation of the project, the Commission underscored the need for each Member State to subscribe to ATI and make a minimum contribution of USD 7.5 million (75 shares equivalent) to ATI Capital. It also noted that EBID should subscribe to the share capital of ATI as part of ECOWAS' commitment to this initiative.

85. However, to ensure the availability of funds for Member States' to pay up their capital subscription to ATI shares, the Commission informed Council that it had commenced discussions with the World Bank to provide funding support to Member States for the execution of this project. The World Bank indicated its willingness to continue discussions on this issue.

86. The Commission also indicated that in view of effective implementation of the ECOWAS-ATI partnership, the following stages are essential:

1) Signature by the ECOWAS Commission and ATI of a framework agreement on the partnership and establishment of an investment guarantee mechanism in the region.

2) Signature and ratification by each Member State of the ATI agreement, in line with the Agency's regulations. This activity will be coordinated by the ECOWAS Commission.

3) Encourage the countries that have already initiated the process to sustain their efforts and finalize their ATI membership, with the others starting the process as soon as possible.

4) Council to authorize the Commission to conclude the negotiations with the World Bank to secure financial support for the Member States.

87. Council took note of the information provided and encouraged the Commission to sustain its action of coordinating the implementation of this project.

Item 16: Any Other Business

88. The Republics of Sierra Leone and Benin announced their intentions to field candidates for impending election to the AU Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, for the first term and renewal of mandate respectively. Council stressed the need to harmonise regional positions to maximise the chances of ECOWAS candidates for international posts and reinforce the solidarity of the Member States in supporting regional candidatures. In this regard, Council decided to refer the matter to the attention of the Authority of Heads of State and Government for inclusion on the agenda.

Item 17: Adoption of the Report

89. This report was adopted after amendments.

Item 18: Closing Ceremony

90. The Chairperson of Council, Honourable Hanna Serwaah Tetteh (Ms), in her closing remarks, thanked Council members for their contributions during the deliberations and for the spirit of camaraderie, which prevailed during their session. Thereafter, she declared the Seventy-Third Ordinary Session of Council closed, and wished all participants safe journey back to their respective destinations.

DONE AT ABUJA THIS 11th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2014

HONOURABLE HANNA SERWAAH TETTEH (MS)

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

CHAIRPERSON

FOR: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at the Seventy-Third Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers held in Abuja, from 9th – 11th December, 2014 express their profound gratitude to His Excellency Goodluck Ebele Jonathan President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the warm African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Abuja and for the facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the success of their meeting.

DONE AT ABUJA THIS 11TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 2014

THE SESSION