

COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS
DA AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES



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

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**SEVENTY-NINTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

Abuja, 13 -14 December 2017

FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS Commission
Abuja, December 2017

B.D

INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventy-Ninth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers was held at Congress Hall, Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 13th and 14th December 2017.

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; and
- Togolese Republic.

3. The following Institutions and Specialised Agencies were represented:

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

In addition, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was represented at the meeting.

4. A list of participants is attached as an annex to this report.

ITEM A: OPENING SESSION (Speeches – Chairman of Council & President of the ECOWAS Commission

5. In his opening address, H.E. Prof. Robert Dussey, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Togolese Republic, and Chair of the

Council of Ministers, expressed his profound gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Government and people of Nigeria for the warm and fraternal welcome extended to the various delegations, and then commended the Administration and Finance Committee, the Mediation and Security Council, along with the Commission President for the work accomplished.

6. After recalling the priorities of the Community since the 78th Ordinary Session held on 1st and 2 June 2017 in Monrovia, Prof. Robert Dussey noted a decline in revenue in recent years and called on all Member States to be more responsible and prudent for the actualisation of the ECOWAS Vision 2020.

7. He regretted the low level of integration, 40 years after the creation of ECOWAS and urged Member States to focus on the effective implementation of programmes relating to the region's economic performance and encouraged Member States to move forward in unity. Lastly, he pointed out that many critical and priority issues affecting the Community would be submitted for Council's consideration through reports and memoranda, before declaring the 79th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers duly open.

8. Taking the floor, His Excellency Mr. Marcel A. de Souza, President of the ECOWAS Commission thanked the delegations for their presence, as well as all those who contributed to the smooth organization of the meeting. He also expressed his gratitude to H.E. Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for all the facilities provided to ensure the successful organisation of the statutory meetings.

9. He thereafter stated that, in 2017, the ECOWAS Commission continued the implementation of cost containment measures, which have been extended to all Specialised Institutions. He, however, noted that the non-payment or delay in the payment of Community Levy resources continue to be a major challenge, and called on Member States to honour their commitments.

10. On the smooth running of the Organisation, the Commission President emphasised the urgent need to apply the relevant Community Protocols and Texts relating to major projects, whose implementation require a peaceful, secure and stable environment. He further added that our sub-region is confronted with challenges such as terrorism and internal political crises which absorb a significant portion of Community resources that should have been allocated to development programmes. Consequently, he invited Member States to come to this realisation and adopt, through consultations, appropriate measures to ensure peace, security and stability in the sub-region.

11. After assuring Member States of the collective commitment and resolve of the entire Commission to ensure the successful completion of the institutional reform within the shortest possible time, Mr. de SOUZA expressed his belief in the 16th economy within a strong and prosperous ECOWAS for the well-being of the people. He concluded by conveying his sincere appreciation to technical and

financial partners, as well as other organisations for their continued support to ECOWAS.

- **Election of Bureau**

12. The following Bureau was elected:

- Chair - Togolese Republic
- Rapporteurs - Republic of Cabo Verde
Republic of The Gambia
Republic of Mali

- Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme

13. The following agenda was adopted after amendments

A. **OPENING SESSION**

- Welcome Remarks by the Chairman of Council, H.E. Professor Robert Dussey, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Togolese Republic
- Statement by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Marcel Alain de Souza
- Election of Bureau
- Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme

ITEMS FOR DECISION

- B. Presentation and Consideration of the 2017 Annual ECOWAS Report
- C. Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 78th Ordinary Session of Council
- D. Presentation on the Financial Situation of the Community
- E. Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2017 Interim Report
- F. Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 22nd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee
 - Presentation of the Opinion of the ECOWAS Parliament on the Community's 2018 Budget
- G. Update on the Allocation of Statutory Positions in ECOWAS
- H. Consideration and Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

- I. Presentation and Consideration of Report of ECOWAS Ministers of Gender:
 - a) Presentation and Consideration of the Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection System to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa;
 - b) Presentation and Consideration of the Trafficking in Persons Plan of Action 2018 -2022;
 - c) Presentation of the Declarations of the Forum of First Ladies of ECOWAS Member Countries, 2017 Edition
- J. Presentation and Consideration of Report of Ministers of Education on the Harmonisation and Mutual Recognition of Certificates
- K. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Fifteenth Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers-in-charge of Telecommunication and ICT
- L. Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Termination of Contract of AML Analytical Software for Processing of Suspicious Transaction Reports
- M. Presentation and Consideration of Report of Ministers of Industry
 - Draft Regulation on New Harmonised Standards “ ECOSTAND” by National Standards Organisations
- N. Presentation and Consideration of the Report of 2016 Meeting of the ECOWAS Convergence Council
- O. Presentation and Consideration of Report of the Presidential Task Force On ECOWAS Common Currency
- P. Presentation and Consideration of Report of the Finance Minister’s Meeting on adoption of the ECOWAS Customs Code and Directive on Fiscal Reforms
- Q. Presentation and consideration of the final report of the 31st ECOWAS Audit Committee meeting
- R. Presentation of the report of the ECOWAS Judicial Council

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- S. Memorandum on the Establishment of an ECOWAS Radio Station: Transfer of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Radio to ECOWAS
- T. Update on Institutional Reform Project

- U. Update on the implementation of the ECOWAS Common Industrial Policy
- V. Update on the Organisation of Roundtable on the Community Development Programme
- W. Memorandum on the Task Force on ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme
- X. Any Other Business
 - Request For Support For State Candidatures For Positions in International Organisations
- Y. Adoption of Report
- Z. Closing Ceremony

OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

Item B: Presentation and Consideration of the 2017 Annual Report of ECOWAS

14. The 2017 Annual Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission provided a comprehensive account of the status of implementation of the Work Programmes of the Commission and other Community Institutions in 2017. The report also analysed recent socio-economic developments in the ECOWAS region and the international economic and financial environment as well as the outlook for 2018.

15. **Regarding the global economic environment**, real GDP growth was projected at 3.6 percent in 2017 compared to 3.2 percent in 2016 due largely to a rebound in investment, trade and production in the advanced economies and China.

16. Real GDP growth in Africa was expected to recover from 1.8% in 2016 to 3.1% in 2017 and 3.3% in 2018, driven largely by the recovery of global prices of certain raw materials and the mitigation of the drought in West and East Africa, with the exception of Cabo Verde that suffered its worst drought in 20 years. In West Africa, real GDP growth rate was projected at 2.1% in 2017, against 0.2% in the previous year due largely to the expected recovery in the prices of the main products exported by the ECOWAS Member States as well as improved security in oil producing regions.

17. With regard to the implementation of the Community Work Programme, the report reveals that considerable progress was made in enhancing the prospects of economic and monetary integration, consolidation of the common market, strengthening the visibility of ECOWAS' democratic gains as well as consolidating regional peace and security.



18. **Regarding regional security**, the report underscored the persisting challenges in the area of peace and security in the region, particularly the threats of terrorism in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Northern Nigeria and the threat to regional maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. On elections, the Commission dispatched (i) a legislative election observation mission to The Gambia from 1 to 8 April, 2017, (ii) a pre-election mission to Monrovia from 16 to 19 July, 2017 and (iii) a long-term mission from 16 September 2017 to assess the various activities leading to the holding of Liberia's presidential and legislative elections which took place on 10 October 2017.

19. **Concerning monetary integration**, significant progress was made towards economic and monetary integration as a result of the decisions taken at the 4th meeting of the Presidential Task Force on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme held in Niamey on 24 October 2017. A follow-up meeting was also held between the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Governors of Central Banks of West Africa at the ECOWAS Commission on 1 November 2017 where key recommendations were made for accelerating the implementation of the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.

20. **Concerning the consolidation of the customs union and the free movement of persons and goods**, the Commission continued to implement activities relating to the roll out of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) in all the Member States in the region. In addition, the Task Force on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), carried out advocacy missions to thirteen Member States to sensitize them on the provisions of the protocol on free movement of products originating from ECOWAS. In the area of Free Movement, the Commission prepared a road map for the roll out of the national biometric identity card as well as the draft manuals on free movement and the management of ECOWAS borders. The Commission also strongly condemned the heinous crimes that were being perpetuated against African migrants in Libya and initiated contacts with the African Union on the issue of repatriating the affected migrants to their countries of origin.

21. **On trade negotiations**, the Commission continued to pursue efforts to get all Member States to sign the EPA Agreement resulting in a commitment by The Gambia and Mauritania to sign the Agreement. Regarding the Community Development Programme, the Commission implemented activities focusing on the organisation of the Donor Round Table meeting scheduled for 25 and 26 January, 2018 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

22. **On infrastructural development**, the Commission made significant progress in the implementation of the ECOWAS regional road transport facilitation and transit programme, and in the conduct of feasibility studies on the Abidjan-Lagos and Abidjan-Dakar Corridor construction projects. Activities were also undertaken in the area of air transport and energy focusing mainly on the validation of the final study report on the development of a Master Plan for rural and peri-

urban electrification in West Africa, as well as the implementation of interconnection projects of Member States and the emergency electricity supply programme to The Gambia, Mali and Sierra Leone. The Commission also urged Partners involved in the Sealink project to ensure that it progresses and is fully implemented.

23. **On industrial development, promotion of the private sector and human development**, the Commission executed activities under the ECOWAS Quality Policy (ECOQUAL) and ECOWAS Standards Harmonization Programme (ECOSHAM) and the West African Capital Market Integration programmes (WACMIP).

24. **Regarding agriculture, food and nutritional security and Environment**, the Commission continued with the implementation and monitoring of 24 innovative field projects on food and nutritional security led by various development stakeholders in the Member States. Significant efforts were also made to set up a regional food stock and ECOWAS Relief Programmes. **Concerning Environment**, the Commission, with the support of the Swedish Cooperation, strengthened Member States' capacities to access global funding for climate change reduction and adaptation,

25. **With regard to education, Science and Technology**, the Commission remained focused on the development of the region's human capital through the harmonisation of national policies and strategies aimed at fostering youth mobility, sharing scientific experiences in the field of biotechnology, aerospace and the strengthening of the culture of peace and the fight against violent extremism. The Commission also implemented activities under the ECOWAS – Nnamdi Azikiwe Academic Mobility Scheme.

26. **On humanitarian and Social Affairs**, the Commission provided humanitarian response to the disaster which occurred in Sierra Leone and organised in Niamey In October 2017, the ECOWAS First Ladies Forum which focused on the eradication of fistula and the protection of children in West Africa.

27. **Concerning Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**, a draft regulation was validated on 6 October 2017 by ECOWAS ICT Ministers, laying down a harmonised legal and tariff framework for roaming on mobile communication networks within the ECOWAS space. The Commission also commenced efforts to mobilise the necessary resources for the commencement of an ECOWAS Radio Station by February 2018.

28. **On International Cooperation and Institutional Matters**, eighteen (18) new ambassadors were accredited to ECOWAS and an Association Agreement between ECOWAS and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania was signed on 5 May 2017. The Commission also undertook an impact study on the proposed Membership of Morocco and signed a Memorandum of a Understanding with the

Tunisian Government for the establishment of a framework for cooperation and platform for dialogue between ECOWAS and Tunisia.

29. **With regard to other ECOWAS institutions**, the report highlighted the activities carried out by each of them in the period under review, including parliamentary and judicial activities, health initiatives, efforts to check money laundering and the mobilisation of financial resources for the development of the Community.

30. **In conclusion**, the report highlighted the main challenges and prospects facing the regional integration process and made salient recommendations focusing on the consolidation of peace, good political and economic governance, deepening efforts at economic and monetary integration and ensuring compliance of Member States with the provision of the Community levy and ratification of outstanding ECOWAS Protocols and Conventions.

31. Council congratulated the President of the Commission for the quality of the annual report presented, which in its view, covered a broad spectrum of sectoral activities within the Community.

32. After the deliberations that ensued, Council agreed on the following:

- a) The need for all Member States to promptly commence the issuance of the Biometric Identity Cards and for the Commission to provide technical assistance in that regard and adopt accompanying measures towards the realisation of the project;
- b) Member States should recommit themselves to the establishment of a borderless region, whilst urging the Commission to take all necessary measures for the speedy operationalisation of the joint border posts. The Commission should also consider the possibility of mobilising additional resources from other partners to complete the joint border post project if necessary;
- c) Council expressed grave concern regarding African migrants in detention centres in Italy and Spain, and directed the Commission to take the necessary steps to handle the situation responsibly.
- d) In relation to the report on the status of the Common External Tariff, Council noted the need for regular joint meetings between ECOWAS and the UEMOA in a bid to advance the attainment of a Customs Union;
- e) Council welcomed the reports from Member States on the status of payment of their community levies as well as the negotiation and signing of memoranda of understanding for the payment of outstanding contribution arrears;

- f) Council also welcomed the Commission's intention to ensure the attainment of the ratio of 65:35, in programmes/administrative expenses within the context of institutional reform.

Item C: Consideration of the Implementation Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the Seventy-Eighth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers

33. The Commission presented an implementation status report on the tasks assigned to ECOWAS Institutions by the Seventy-Eighth Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers held in Monrovia, Liberia in June 2017.

34. Council congratulated the Commission on the implementation status report presented and urged the Commission to ensure prompt completion of other outstanding tasks.

Item D: Presentation on the Financial Situation of the Community

35. The Commission made a presentation to the Council of Ministers on the Financial Situation of the Community. The presentation highlighted that Community Levy, accounts for about 70% of the Community's resources and is the main source of revenue. As at 30th September 2017, Community Levy collection was UA55.4 million, representing a 57.5% short fall of the projected amount of UA130.3 million.

36. The presentation indicated that the Community recorded a total income from all sources of UA110.07m as at 30th September, corresponding to 41% of the UA267.94m annual estimate. UA73.9m was allocated to Community Institutions and other expenditure categories from the total income as at 30th September 2017.

37. The presentation emphasized the fact that the Commission commenced the implementation of cost-cutting measures to address the fiscal imbalance from April 2016.

38. The challenges and conclusions put forward were as follows:

- a) Community Institutions should continue to implement programmes and projects geared towards fostering regional and economic integration, despite myriad of challenges encountered;
- b) The 2017 Community budget implementation was significantly affected due to the poor performance of Community Levy receipts, and non-payment of arrears by Member States. Low inflow of donor resources was also a major factor;
- c) Cost containment and expenditure rationalisation measures were implemented to ensure that critical Community integration, development, and peace and security-related activities and programmes are executed;

- d) Financial and Budgetary Controls mechanisms were utilized to ensure that the Community obtains value for money in all its expenditure;
- e) Quarterly programme work plans served as management planning tool and guide for cash flow forecasting and programme implementation;
- f) Budget Arbitration process was applied to ensure compliance with ECOWAS Strategic Pillars and prioritization of programmes and activities;
- g) ECOLink is being used as a critical tool for effective and efficient management of Community resources;
- h) All Member States were implored to fully and unconditionally comply with the Community Levy Protocol through its full application with respect to the tax base, collection and deposit of Levy proceeds;
- i) Concerned Member States are encouraged to pay their arrears of contribution and outstanding Community Levy without further delay;
- j) Community Institutions should intensify efforts to obtain funding from Development Partners for critical and high-impact programmes with huge outlays (Troops Deployment, Public Health initiatives, etc.);
- k) Ongoing study is in progress to explore alternative funding mechanisms aside from the Community Levy for the Community;

39. Council congratulated the Commission for the quality of the report presented and adopted the recommendations contained therein;

Item E: Presentation and Consideration of the 2017 Interim Report of the Financial Controller

40. The 2017 mid-year Report of the Financial Controller was presented to the Council of Ministers for adoption. It covered the budgetary, financial and staffing situation of Community Institutions for the period 1st January to 30th June 2017. The report recalled that the 77th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers approved a balanced budget of UA267.9m (\$378m), for the execution of programme and administrative activities for the regional integration agenda in 2017. Midway through the year, a total of UA75.6m or 28% of budgeted income had been mobilised and UA65.8m spent on administrative and programme activities. The Report recalled that the Community Levy mechanism remains the main source of income for ECOWAS, but that resources from the mechanism has been consistently dwindling over the last couple of years. Inflows from this major source recorded 35% of the annual expectation, translating into a rather low overall budget mobilisation rate of 28%. Programme implementation rate was 23%, whilst administrative expenses marked 32% of budget for the same period. On the whole, the approved expenditure budget was executed at 25%, during the first half of the year.

41. It was reported that whilst most Member States are up to date with the Community Levy obligations, a few continue to default consistently. This situation makes the Community's financial situation even more fragile, given that the overall resource quantum is on the decline. Contribution arrears, which are unpaid obligations due at the start of the Community Levy regime remains largely unredeemed by some Member States, despite phenomenal progress made by others, whilst some have completely paid off their indebtedness in this regard.

42. Staff strength stood at 1,118, marking a net increase of 12 employees over the number recorded at the end of December 2016. This is composed of 25 Statutory Appointees, (as 2 were suspended during the reporting period, but have since been replaced), 51 Directors, 476 Professional Staff of the P1-P6 category and 566 General Staff. The gender balance stood at a 75:25 male to female ratio. All member States have staff representations, albeit in varying proportions.

43. The Financial Controller reported that several operational and administrative challenges have been encountered in the course of implementing approved programmes and activities, and a few significant ones have been highlighted for Council's attention. The Community switched on an electronic accounting and management platform (ECOLink) in 2015. Whilst some remarkable successes have been chalked, there remains some fine-tuning to unleash the full potentials of the software's numerous benefits.

44. The Financial Controller also reported that startling revelations of financial impropriety have been made in some of ECOWAS agencies, which strongly demonstrate dysfunctional internal control mechanisms. There is an urgent imperative to inject fresh dynamism into the overall internal control architecture before the implementation of the Institutional Reforms, in order to attenuate risks to which Community resources are currently exposed. The Commission is also exposed to substantial legal risks arising from poor to non-existent representation of the Commission in court cases brought against it.

45. In conclusion, on the basis of encounters in the exercise of its functions, the Office of the Financial Controller proposed a number of recommendations for the kind consideration and adoption of Council. These recommendations are expected to significantly enhance the financial and administrative effectiveness of the Institution

- a. Council to give clear guidelines on the scope of authority of its Chairperson at any given time, specifically what matters may be approved on its behalf *off-session* and what may be reserved solely for the consideration of *Council-in-Session*.

- b. Council is invited to deliberate and guide the Financial Controller on the way forward regarding waivers granted, which conflict with existing regulations.
- c. In view of the rather fragile financial situation of the Community, Council is urged to impress upon Heads of Institution in general, and the leadership of Parliament in particular, to exercise prudence in the management of Community resources, particularly regarding sizes of delegations during official travels.
- d. Council may wish to request the Commission to order immediate investigations into the financial administration of Agencies who continue to make payments without vetting by the Financial Controller, as stipulated by the financial regulations. More importantly, officers found to have wilfully disregarded Council-approved financial regulations, be sanctioned to drive home the need for financial discipline in all facets of the integration effort.
- e. Council is called upon to direct Management to institute an administrative enquiry to establish the causes of a contingent liability against ECOWAS of an amount of Naira 170m (\$472,000), resulting from a contract transaction between the Commission and Vision Kam Jay Nig. Ltd. This would help avoid recurrence of such burdens on the Community.
- f. Council may wish to direct Management to conduct a forensic audit of the numerous cases of child adoption and other apparent malpractices associated with staff dependent children's education grant across all Institutions. Associated offenders should be appropriately sanctioned to deter any further abuse of this and other staff benefits.
- g. Council may wish to direct Management to expeditiously redress the unusually high costs of electricity and speedily conclude on-going arrangements with the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) for the direct supply of cheaper and more reliable product-quality petroleum products for the organisation.
- h. Management to revert to the fixed asset threshold as approved by Council, in the Manual of Accounting Procedures, or to engage due consultations and process for amending same.
- i. Management to conduct an independent assessment of the Integrity of the Community's IT infrastructure, and the capacity needs of the Community Computer Centre (CCC) to adequately protect and safeguard ECOLink platforms, databases and overall Community IT investments.

- j. Council may wish to direct an independent review of all ECOLink Phase-1 modules, so as to ensure that they are functioning as expected and delivering the desired benefits commensurate with the colossal financial resources invested therein thus far.
- k. Council may wish to direct Management to comply forthwith, with the monitoring and supervisory obligations of contracts imposed by Article 80 of the Tenders Code, to guarantee satisfactory delivery and execution of goods and services contracted for with Community resources.
- l. Management to institute a study with a view to harmonising conditions of service, scope of authority, and the terms of engagement for all ECOWAS Agencies, Offices and Centres, and align them with extant remuneration frameworks. This is to rectify current distortions in this regard.
- m. Management to immediately revamp post-payment control structures, so as to ensure the much needed preventive measures become operational and to safeguard Community assets and financial resources.
- n. Management to intensify Community Levy mobilisation efforts, by engaging the dedicated Technical Team more regularly on the field, complemented with occasional high-level advocacy with governments of Member States concerned.
- o. The appointment of Special/Permanent/Resident Representatives has continued to be without a defined tenure limit. Council is called upon to a set tenure limit on this type of appointment.
- p. With regard to the discovery of fraud, embezzlement of funds and poor financial management practices at ERERA, Council is urged to enjoin Management to pursue this matter to its logical conclusions. Management should also take all necessary legally permissible measures to recover all such stolen Community resources. Finally, severe deterrent sanctions should be imposed on all found to be involved in this malfeasance.
- q. Effective immediately, all positions involving heads of finance and administration should be handled solely by professionals with requisite qualifications and competencies in Accounting and Finance.
- r. Management should enhance operational efficiency, internal controls and overall sound financial management, by the immediate detachment of administrative and financial management responsibilities of ERERA from the Regulatory Council which shall

henceforth be restricted to their technical competencies of Electricity Regulations. This would ensure that appropriate professionals are assigned their specific areas of competencies.

- s. Management should set out clear guidelines and conditions for the recruitment of contract staff as these are absent in the extant Staff regulations and ensure strict application of these guidelines in all Institutions.

46. Council deliberated extensively on the report of the Financial Controller. It expressed deep concern about the level of malfeasance discovered in some Institutions with regard to financial transactions and non-compliance with laid down procedures, leading to the loss of considerable amounts of Community resources.

47. It specifically insisted on the need for the Commission to maintain gender balance in the recruitment of staff given the low percentage representation of females in all Community Institutions

48. Council adopted the recommendations contained in the report, with the exception of those relating to Parliament. In order to consider the issues concerning the Parliament, Council set up an ad hoc Committee comprising representatives of Ghana, Mali, Niger, Guinea Bissau and Togo.

49. Council directed that measures undertaken to implement recommendations in the Financial Controller's Report should be reported to it at its next ordinary session in 2018.

Item F: Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 22nd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

50. The final report of the 22nd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Kadangha Bariki Edawé Limbiyé. The report covered the following main areas:

- ❖ Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions
- ❖ Presentation on the Financial Situation of the Community
- ❖ Monitoring and Evaluation Report on Programme Implementation of Community Institutions for the Period January to September 2017
- ❖ Memorandum on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme and Validation of ECOWAS Volunteers Living Allowances
- ❖ Discussion on the ECOWAS Youth Empowerment Initiative

- ❖ Memorandum on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Programme on Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria, Niger and Mali
- ❖ 2018 Consolidated Budget of ECOWAS Institutions
- ❖ 2017 Interim Report of the Financial Controller
- ❖ Any Other Business

51. Council commended the Administration and Finance Committee for the quality of the report presented and adopted the recommendations therein.

52. Council took note of the recommendation made by the AFC for a three-month budgetary provision for Statutory Appointees in view of their end of tenures. It agreed, should the need arise, to make provision for additional resources in the event of an extended recruitment period. Council equally agreed to convene an extraordinary AFC session in January 2018 on the Commission's organogram, in line with the decision of the Heads of State and Government to reduce the number of Statutory Appointees.

53. Council noted that for the first time, the Community Parliament in compliance with its new 2016 Supplementary Act approved the Community Budget, with slight amendments, at its Parliamentary Session held in November 2017.

54. Finally, Council approved the 2018 budget of ECOWAS Institutions in the total sum of UA 227,008,735 as presented in the summary table below:

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF 2018 INCOME BUDGET OF THE COMMUNITY

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Community Levy	175,903,368.86	175,903,368.86	0.00	0%
Reserves	0.00	0.00	0	0%
Arrears of Community Levy	64,078,725.44	64,078,725.44	0	0%
Arrears of Contribution	3,000,000.00	3,000,000.00	0	0%
Other Income	137,500.00	137,500.00	0	0%
External Funding	41,790,207.17	41,790,207.17	0	0%
TOTAL	284,909,801.47	284,909,801.47	0.00	0.00%

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF 2018 EXPENDITURE BUDGET OF THE COMMUNITY

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Community Institutions	225,038,591.00	227,008,735.00	1,970,144	1%
Statutory Obligations	12,018,521.98	12,018,521.98	0	0%
Special Programmes in Member States	16,505,344.38	14,535,200.38	-1,970,144	-12%
Peace & Security	31,347,344.11	31,347,344.11	0	0%
TOTAL	284,909,801.47	284,909,801.47	0	0%

**TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF 2018 EXPENDITURE
BUDGET OF THE INSTITUTIONS**

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
ECOWAS Commission	132,676,140.00	134,646,284.00	1,970,144.00	1%
ECOWAS Parliament	18,776,624.00	18,776,624.00	0.00	0.0%
Community Court of Justice	16,383,903.00	16,383,903.00	0	0%
West African Health Organisation (WAHO)	47,170,562.00	47,170,562.00	0	0%
Inter-Governmental Action-Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA)	10,031,362.00	10,031,362.00	0	0%
TOTAL	225,038,591.00	227,008,735.00	1,970,144.00	0.88%

**TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF 2018 EXPENDITURE
BUDGETS OF STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS**

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Chairman of Authority (0.5% of Member State's Community Levy)	19,327.74	19,327.74	0.00	0%
Chairman of Authority (UA 1,200,000)	1,200,000	1,200,000.00	0.00	0%
ECOWAS National Offices (4.5% of Community Levy)	10,799,194.24	10,799,194.24	0.00	0%
TOTAL	12,018,521.98	12,018,521.98	0.00	0%

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF 2018 EXPENDITURE BUDGET OF SPECIAL PROGRAMMES/INTERVENTION IN MEMBER STATES

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Emergency Power Supply	5,500,000.00	5,500,000.00	0	0%
EBID Interest Rate Subsidy Fund (IRSF)	2,210,175.94	2,210,175.94	0	0%
ECOWAS Solidarity Fund	8,795,168.44	6,825,024.44	-1,970,144	-22%
TOTAL	16,505,344.38	14,535,200.38	-1,970,144.00	-12%

**TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF 2018 EXPENDITURE
BUDGET OF PEACE & SECURITY**

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Peace Fund	8,795,168.44	8,795,168.44	0	0%
ECOMIB	13,288,042.67	13,288,042.67	0	0%
ECOMIG	9,264,133.00	9,264,133.00	0	0%
TOTAL	31,347,344.11	31,347,344.11	0.00	0%

The ratios relating to the draft 2018 budget of the Institutions of the Community are as follows:

Administrative Cost - **38.1%**
Programme Cost - **61.9%**

RD

	PROGRAMME	ADMINISTRATIVE	TOTAL
ECOWAS Commission	79,813,104.49	54,833,179.51	134,646,284.00
ECOWAS Parliament	10,191,557.00	8,585,067.00	18,776,624.00
Community Court of Justice	1,294,930.00	15,088,973.00	16,383,903.00
West African Health Organization (WAHO)	41,732,009.00	5,438,553.00	47,170,562.00
Inter-Governmental Action-Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA)	7,377,590.21	2,653,771.79	10,031,362.00
TOTAL	140,409,190.70	86,599,544.30	227,008,735.00
%	61.9%	38.1%	

Item G: Update on the Allocation of Statutory Positions in ECOWAS

55. The Commission provided an update on the allocation of statutory positions and recalled the decision to reduce the number of statutory positions in the Community from 27 to 18. It further noted that the Council of Ministers could not reach a consensus on the subject at its extraordinary session held in Addis Ababa on 2 July 2017 and subsequently referred the matter to the Authority.

56. The Commission then stated that it was no longer seized of the matter and that the Chairman of Authority had taken up the matter with a view to initiating consultations with his peers. Consequently, the issue has been included on the agenda of the Authority for consideration during the closed-door session.

57. Council took note of the information provided.

Item H: Consideration and Adoption of Draft Agenda of the 52nd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

58. The Commission presented the draft Agenda of the Fifty-Second Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government and the agenda was adopted after consideration and amendments.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

Item I: Presentation and Consideration of Report of ECOWAS Ministers of Gender;

A. Presentation and Consideration of the Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection System to Prevent and Respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation Against Children in West Africa

59. The Commission presented the Report of an ECOWAS Ministerial meeting on child protection which was convened on 4th October 2017 to consider the “ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa” The Commission in collaboration with its partners, “the

Regional Child Protection Working Group” developed this Strategic Framework and set building blocks for establishing and strengthening National Child Protection Systems across the fifteen Member States to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa”. The Framework would promote accountability and provide direction and guidance to Members States on Child Protection and also influence national programme initiatives that promote a protective environment to children, to the extent that children below the age of 18 in the ECOWAS region are provided with equitable prevention and response services to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

60. The Strategic Framework outlines five protection priorities requiring urgent action by the 15 Member States; and also provides detailed guidance on proven approaches to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation of children in the region in both emergency and non-emergency situations. The five protection priority areas are: Violence against children (sexual, physical and emotional); Child Marriage; Child Labour; Birth Registration; and Children on the Move.

61. The ECOWAS Strategic Framework builds on previous regional and international policies and instruments that are relevant to Child Protection, including among others, the Multilateral Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States, the Declaration and implementation on the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child 2001-2010, and the ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action of 2013, amongst others.

62. Child Protection in the West African region will therefore depend on how effectively the commitments, detailed in the Strategic Framework are operationalised in Member States. These commitments include compliance with international legal frameworks; strengthening of policy, structures, functions and institutional framework; international cooperation and identification of stakeholders; partnership networking and youth participation; human resources and capacity building, service delivery and information management systems; resource mobilisation, allocation and accountability; communication, social mobilisation and regional responsibilities and monitoring and evaluation.

63. The Council of Ministers is hereby requested to formally adopt the Report of the Ministerial Meeting on Child Protection by the Ministers of ECOWAS Member States which principally recommends the adoption of the “ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa” and present same to the Authority of Heads of State for approval.

64. Council adopted the Report and the Child Protection framework and agreed to recommend its endorsement by the Authority.

B. Presentation and Consideration of the Trafficking in Persons Plan of Action 2018 -2022

65. In response to the 2000 UN *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (Palermo Protocol), ECOWAS Member States, in 2001, declared their commitment to the eradication of the Trafficking in Persons within the region by adopting the '*Declaration on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons*' and the first ECOWAS *Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons*, (2002-2003). Through these Instruments, the ECOWAS Heads of State articulated their vision that all Community citizens benefit from effective protection measures against trafficking in persons; particularly women and children.

66. Since 2002, there were three main Plans of Action implemented by the ECOWAS Commission. These are the 2002-2003 PoA, ECCAS/ECOWAS Plan of Action (2006-2009) and the 2008-2011 PoA.

67. At the 2014 Annual Review meeting of ECOWAS Member States, it was agreed that a new PoA should be developed taking into cognizance the recommendations made in the impact assessment reports and the experts/FMM technical meeting of the previous PoAs. Accordingly, the development of the 2018-2022 ECOWAS PoA against TIP became imperative with the objective that "all persons, especially women and children within the ECOWAS region benefit from effective protection measures against trafficking in persons".

68. The 2018-2022 TIP Plan of Action addresses the following critical areas such as Policy, Legislation and Institutional frameworks for preventing and responding to Trafficking in Persons; effective mechanism to protect and support victims of Trafficking in Persons; promotion of special measures to reduce TIP vulnerability rate within the ECOWAS Community, especially among Women and Children; Knowledge and exchange of TIP data within the region; strengthening of the capacity of State and Non-State Actors to respond effectively to TIP issues through specialised trainings; strengthening appropriate measures for authentic and relevant Travel and Identity documents within the ECOWAS Community; and strengthening the coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanism for effective and efficient implementation of the Plan of Action; which will ensure effective national and regional coordination of TIP activities and intervention and monitoring of implementation of the 2018-2022 Plan of Action.

69. The document is a pre-existing Plan of Action, which was renewed and validated by Member States' Focal Points on Counter Trafficking in Persons. The Plan of Action is therefore presented based on subsisting approval of the Heads of State.

70. The Council of Ministers is hereby requested to formally consider the Report of the Experts on Counter Trafficking in Persons of ECOWAS Member States on "ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2018 – 2022)" and transmit same to the Authority of the Heads of State for approval.

71. Council commended the Commission on the initiative and agreed to recommend all the draft instruments for the approval of the Authority.

C. Report on Declarations of the Forum of First Ladies of ECOWAS Member States, 2017 Edition

72. The Commission presented a report on the outcomes of the forum of First Ladies of ECOWAS Member States organised in Niger Republic on Thursday, 5th October 2017, under the auspices of H.E Mr Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, the President of the Togolese Republic and current Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.

73. Council congratulated the Chair of Authority, as well as the Commission for this initiative and lauded the commitment of Her Excellencies, as evidenced in their meeting Declarations, towards assisting the Commission in implementing three (3) very important initiatives for the protection of women and children in the region namely:-

- The Declaration on the Eradication of Obstetric Fistula in West Africa;
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and the Fight Against Gender-based Violence in West Africa and
- The Declaration on Child Protection, Including the Fight Against Human Trafficking, Exploitation, Child Labour and all Forms of Violence Against Children.

Item J: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of Ministers of Education on the Harmonisation and Mutual Recognition of Certificates

74. The meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Education was held on 28 and 29 September 2017 in Lome, Togolese Republic with the theme "sharing experiences and enhancement of new best practices for the harmonisation of the educational systems of the region and development of the human capital based on knowledge economy".

75. The meeting was graced by the presence of 26 Ministers in charge of Education, representatives of 35 development partners and civil society organisations who discussed and decided on the outcomes of the meeting of experts (22 and 23 September in Abuja), and approved the main recommendations for adoption by Council and Authority of Heads of State and Government.

76. These are specifically:

- The creation of an ECOWAS specialised education support agency for better impact on :
 - Education governance structure and management of crisis in schools and universities by focusing on mediation, quality assurance, accreditation procedures, diplomas and certificates recognition among Member States;
 - Curricula and educational reform to meet users' needs and the demand of the labour market;
 - Resource mobilisation and coordination of partners to create more coherence and synergy and increase the system's efficiency

77. The World Bank's support to the African Centre of Excellence (ACE), for more impact; the African Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA) for promoting access to education for all, the African Development Bank (AfDB) for human capital development, International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA) for the education of girls, West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN) for ICT connectivity in universities and research centre, the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Education or SAFE programmes, Association for Livestock Promotion in the Sahel and Savannah (APESS) with its activities on the education, 'G' Skills for building capacity of in EFTP, WANEP for education for peace, whilst the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) for SIGE and UNIDOC for the fight against drug curricula.

78. The Ministers also discussed the enhancement of technical and vocational training to promote the employability of young people. They encouraged the establishment of mechanisms for the dissemination of regional integration ideals in schools. Therefore, they decided to adopt the exercise book samples proposed by the Commission and recommended that the ECOWAS flag be flown in schools alongside the national flag. They also called for the harmonization of basic education.

79. Council adopted the report as well as the recommendations contained therein.

Item K: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Fifteenth Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers-in-charge of Telecommunication and ICT

80. The Fifteenth (15th) meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Telecommunications/ICT, which took place on 6th October 2017 in Praia, Cabo Verde adopted the revised Supplementary Act on Universal Access and Service and the Draft Regulation on the Implementation of Free Roaming within ECOWAS.

81. The Ministers also approved the financial plan for the revised 2018 - 2023 ECOWAS Regional ICT Strategy as well as the Terms of Reference of the Regional Committee on Spectrum Management, the list of laboratories recommended for regional accreditation for the conformance testing of DTT receivers and the draft recommendation on a Harmonised Approach to Domestic Licensing and Mutual Recognition at the sub-regional Level of Earth Stations in Motion.

82. Furthermore, the Ministers gave their support to the Amilcar Cabral Submarine Cable initiative that will connect Cabo Verde to Guinea Bissau and some countries of the Mano River Union (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) They also agreed on the development of a regional policy on Digital Planning to encourage Member States to plan for the deployment of fiber optic cables in the implementation of infrastructure projects such as road, railways and power grids.

83. Council adopted the report and recommendations presented.

Item L: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Termination of Contract of AML Analytical Software for Processing of Suspicious Transaction Reports

84. The Director General of GIABA, based on the decision of the 74th meeting of the Council of Ministers held on 16th May 2015 in Accra, Ghana, approving the settlement of arrears owing to JetLink Ventures, the supplier of the Analytical Software (Oracle Mantas) to be utilised in combatting money laundering, informed Council that full payment had been made in the sum of three million three hundred and fifty-two thousand and eight dollars seventy-six cents (3, 352, 008.76) representing the cost of installing the software in the beneficiary Member States and annual software maintenance fees incurred up to June 2017.

85. Following a number of concerns on its dysfunction raised by the 13 beneficiary Member States of the project, GIABA brought together in November 2016 all the stakeholders in the project, namely, the beneficiary Financial Intelligence Units and the supplier of the software, to find ways and means of resolving the deficiencies identified in the version of the software delivered. During this meeting, the supplier proposed a new version which the company had developed in a bid to resolve the deficiencies identified. However, this new version

would only be made available to beneficiaries on payment of an additional amount by GIABA.

86. In order to determine the extent of these deficiencies, GIABA in June 2017, hired the services of two (2) experts to: (i) assess the software's performance and level of user satisfaction on one hand, and (ii) proffer the most relevant recommendations for the most appropriate decision to be taken, on the other.

87. The Director General further indicated that in addition to the three million three hundred and fifty-two thousand and eight dollars seventy-six cents (3,352,008.76) already paid, if the software provider was to continue with the maintenance of the said software, then the annual fee of 392,700 dollars would continue to be paid indefinitely by GIABA for a non-functional equipment which, according to the experts' report, does not meet the needs of these FIUs.

88. Council took note of the memorandum from GIABA and directed that the contract on the Analytical and STR Processing Software to be utilised in combatting money laundering delivered by JetLink Ventures, be terminated with immediate effect, and that a report be made to the next ordinary session of Council.

Item M: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of Ministers of Industry

89. The Memorandum by the Commission presented the meeting report of ECOWAS Ministers responsible for Quality. The meeting, which was held in Niamey, Niger from 19 to 20 October 2017 considered and adopted the ECOWAS harmonised standards.

90. Thus, fifty-three harmonised standards ECOSTAND concerning agricultural produce, food products, chemicals, building and construction products, electro technical equipment and tourism services were adopted by the meeting.

91. The Memorandum urged the Council of Ministers to approve the report of the sectoral Ministers' meeting on the fifty-three harmonised standards, as well as the Regulations approving the standards.

92. Council adopted the report and the Regulations approving the standards

Item N: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 2016 Meeting of the ECOWAS Convergence Council

93. The 2016 ECOWAS Convergence Report reviewed the macroeconomic performance and status of convergence of Member States and made specific recommendations to each country on the improvement and consolidation of its economic and financial situation and convergence level. It emerged that there was

no progress in 2016 compared to 2015 in terms of compliance with current macroeconomic convergence criteria.

94. Following deliberations, the 10th Ordinary Session of Council held in Bamako on 14 September, urged Member States to regularly prepare and forward periodic reports and multi-year convergence programmes, in line with the provisions of the Convergence Pact. In addition, the ECOWAS Commission was requested to reflect on ways and means to enhance the participation of Finance Ministers in Convergence Council sessions held twice a year. The Commission should also consider strengthening the multilateral surveillance system for improved monitoring of national economies.

95. Council endorsed the recommendations contained in the report and agreed to forward them to the Authority for its consideration.

Item O: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the Presidential Task Force on ECOWAS Common Currency

96. The Commission presented the conclusions of the 4th session of the Presidential Task Force on the ECOWAS Single Currency held in Niamey on 24th October 2017. The Heads of State of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger and Nigeria who are Task Force members, took part in the meeting alongside the President of the Togolese Republic and Chairman of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. The meeting was preceded by a Ministerial Committee meeting responsible for reviewing implementation of the different activities on the roadmap for the ECOWAS single currency. At the end of the meeting, the Task Force directed the Ministerial Committee to convene within three months, in order to propose a new roadmap to speed up the attainment of the goal to create the single currency by 2020, with countries that would have by that time met the convergence criteria. The Task Force decided to organise its 5th meeting in Accra in February 2018.

97. The Council of Ministers endorsed the conclusions of the Task Force meeting and agreed to submit them to the Authority of Heads of State and Government for consideration.

Item P: Presentation and Consideration of Report of the Finance Minister's Meeting on adoption of the ECOWAS Customs Code and Directive on Fiscal Reforms

98. The Minister of Finance of the Togolese Republic, Mr Sani YAYA presented the report of the meeting of ECOWAS Finance Ministers which held on 24 November 2017 in Abuja. The meeting validated a draft Supplementary Act on the ECOWAS Customs Code and two Directives on fiscal reforms.

99. Council took note of the presentation and endorsed the draft Supplementary Act on the Community Customs Code and the 3 draft Directives on Value Added Tax (VAT), harmonisation of excise duties on tobacco products, as well as the institutional framework for fiscal transition respectively. Council recommended the first 2 Directives for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government. The 3rd Directive, which is an operational instrument, may be adopted by the President of ECOWAS Commission for application.

100. However, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali expressed reservations on the draft Directive on harmonisation of excise duties on tobacco products, and called for an impact study and national consultation of all stakeholders on the draft Directive.

Item Q: Presentation and consideration of the Final Report of the 31st ECOWAS Audit Committee Meeting

101. The Chairperson of the Audit Committee presented the Report of its meeting which was held in Abuja, on the 11th and 12th December 2017.

102. The report of the Audit Committee covered the following:

- Financial Statements of all ECOWAS Institutions for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015;
- Reports by control organs, namely the Financial Controller and the Chief Internal Auditor;
- Draft organogram of the Office of the Auditor General;

103. Recommendations of the Audit Committee:

- Adoption of the 2013 accounts as audited by the External Auditor, KPMG Ghana
- Improvement of the internal control functions of ECOWAS Institutions;
- Provision of all documents on the Institutional Reform pertaining to the establishment of the office of the Auditor General.

104. The Chairman of the Committee reported that the Audit of the 2014 and 2015 accounts is yet to be finalised.

105. Council reiterated its concern over the delay in submitting the consolidated audited financial statements for Community Institutions for the years 2014 to 2016. Council however approved the audited financial statements for 2013 and directed the Commission to make available all the required documentation to enable the Audit Committee monitor the audit of the said accounts.

106. The Commission should also transmit documents relating to the new office of the Auditor General to the Audit Committee

Item R: Presentation of the Report of the Judicial Council

107. The Commission presented the report of the meeting of the Judicial Council which was convened in Abidjan on 9 November 2017 to recruit a Liberian Judge that would replace Justice Micah Wilkins Wright whose appointment as a Judge of the Community Court of Justice had been terminated. The termination was as a result of a judgment of the Supreme Court of Liberia indicting Justice Wright for certain offences committed prior to his appointment as a Judge of the Community Court of Justice.

108. In compliance with the recruitment procedure for Judges of the Court, the Judicial Council conducted an interview of three candidates whose names were forwarded by the Liberian Government.

109. At the end of the exercise Mr. Yusuf Kaba is recommended for appointment as the new Community Court Judge from Liberia who will serve the remaining period of the tenure of Justice Wilkins Wright.

110. Council thanked the Commission for the report and agreed to recommend the appointment of Justice Yusuf Kaba to the Authority for approval.

111. Council also requested the delegation from Cabo Verde to convey to the Vice President of the Judicial Council who is a Cabo Verdian, the need to attend meetings of the Judicial Council.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item S: Memorandum on the Establishment of an ECOWAS Radio Station: Transfer of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Radio to ECOWAS

112. The objective of the ECOWAS Radio/TV Station is to promote the integration of West African populations along with peace, security, stability, democracy and good governance, as well as to bridge strengthening of the information gap on the programmes implemented by ECOWAS Institutions in the field of regional integration and socio-economic development.

113. It may be recalled that the ECOWAS Commission was tasked to investigate the technical, operational and financial requirements for the implementation of the ECOWAS Radio/TV. A comprehensive report on the technical and cost requirements for the implementation of the ECOWAS Radio/TV was presented to the xxx session of the AFC which recommended the Commission explore other funding mechanisms due to the financial constraints faced by the Community.

114. Seizing the opportunity of the close-down of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) by March 2018, the ECOWAS Commission requested and received approval from the Government of Liberia and UN to operate the UNMIL Radio in Monrovia as the ECOWAS Radio by 2018. This provides the opportunity

to launch ECOWAS Radio in Liberia in 2018 at an affordable cost with plans in place to gradually extend the coverage beyond the borders of Liberia and into the other fourteen West African countries from 2019. The Commission also stated that the concept note for the editorial policy and the management structure for the radio as well as the mode of financing have been developed.

115. Council took note of the information provided and congratulated the Commission for this initiative. It expressed its appreciation to the United Nations for graciously granting the request of ECOWAS to take-over the UNMIL radio station.

Item T: Update on Institutional Reform

116. The Commission provided a progress report on the status of the ECOWAS institutional reform programme which essentially commenced in 2006 with the transformation of the Executive Secretariat into a Commission. It recalled the 2013-2015 phase of the reforms that yielded proposals for the restructuring of some of the Community Institutions, primarily the Commission itself along with myriad proposals for improving the operational systems procedures and processes of all the institutions for greater efficiency.

117. The update however focused mainly on decisions of the 78th Session of the Council of Ministers and the 51st Ordinary session of the Authority which took place from the 1-2 June 2017 and the 4th June 2017 respectively in Monrovia. These decisions taken within the context of the ongoing reforms were in relation to the structure of the Commission, the establishment of some key positions and Offices including the adoption of some important policies that would generally improve operational effectiveness and efficiency within the Community.

118. The Commission reported that in compliance with Directives from the above stated meetings, work on developing the organogram of the newly adopted nine (9) member Commission had been completed and would be submitted to an extraordinary meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee for its consideration early in the month of January 2018, from where recommendations would be transmitted to Council for approval.

119. The Commission also reported that work on other aspects of the reform such as the restructuring of other Community Institutions, the conduct of a Community-wide staff skills audit and the strengthening of the Commission's internal control functions in the areas of Accounting, Finance, Audit, Human Resources and Procurement was in progress.

120. Council took note of the update and directed the Commission to expedite the process and ensure that the reforms are concluded within the first quarter of 2018.

Item U: Update on the implementation of the ECOWAS Common Industrial Policy

121. The Commission presented a memorandum on the status of implementation of the West African Common Industrial Policy (WACIP), adopted by the Authority of Heads of State and Government in 2010 in line with the Revised ECOWAS Treaty.

122. The memorandum highlighted the importance of this policy, which mainly aims to fast-track West Africa's industrialisation with the implementation of major programmes and projects.

123. However, the West African industrial development goal remains gravely impeded by financial difficulties and the allocation of inadequate resources for the implementation of WACIP.

124. The memorandum gave a general overview of major constraints and challenges including problems facing industrialists, poor industrial governance and insufficient resources for industrial investment in Member States as well as the problems facing the development of value chains.

125. It also provided an overview of ongoing actions and programmes including the establishment of regional quality infrastructure, promotion of the agro industry through the development of value chains, promotion of the regional pharmaceutical industry, development of the regional automotive industry policy.

126. The aim of the memorandum is to inform Council of Ministers on issues and constraints facing regional industrialisation, urging them to take all measures necessary to ensure the implementation of WACIP, to meet the region's industrial development goals

127. Council took note of the memorandum and adopted the recommendation therein

Item V: Update on the Organisation of Roundtable on the Community Development Programme

128. Following the decision of the 49th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, held in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire) to organise a roundtable for the financing of priority projects of the Community Development Programme (PCD), the ECOWAS Commission, in conjunction with the Ivorian authorities, agreed on **25 and 26 January 2018** for the organisation of the Roundtable.

129. In that regard, the Commission carried out series of preparatory activities related in particular to the finalisation of technical documents, the consultation and sensitisation of partners and investors and the practical organisation of the Roundtable.

130. The technical documents prepared focus on seven (7) priority projects selected for the Roundtable. The projects cover the areas of transport and energy infrastructure, agriculture and health. A technical restructuring was proposed for eligible projects through public-private partnership (PPP) with the support of the PPP Regional Unit of the BOAD.

131. Sensitisation and consultation activities continued with United Nations agencies, Central Bank Governors and Ministers of Economy and Finance in the region. Regarding consultations with regional private sector investors, the Commission continued its discussions with the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) for the technical finalisation of the Sealink Project, as well as for the mobilisation of private sector stakeholders in the region for the Roundtable. Financial and guarantee institutions agreed to organise syndications to support the financing of priority projects.

132. Regarding the practical organisation of the Roundtable, the Commission carried out several activities relating to the preparation of documents for the Roundtable, recruitment of communication and event management agencies, identification of participants as well as preparation and sending of invitation letters.

133. Council took note of the information provided.

Item W: Memorandum on the Task Force on ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme

134. The Chairman of the Task Force on ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) provided an update on the activities of his group. He pointed out that the Task Force carried out advocacy missions to twelve (12) out of the fifteen (15) Member States. At the end of the missions, tariff and non-tariff barriers, as well as abnormal practices were noted in Member States. The visited Member States made commitments in an Aide-Mémoire to sustainably eliminate barriers to intra-regional trade, as identified during the missions.

135. In view of the persistent abnormal practices at borders and on the corridors, the Chairman requested for the enhancement of the powers of the Task Force to monitor illicit activities.

136. Taking note of the status of execution of the mission entrusted to the Task Force by the Heads of State and Government and given the need to undertake unannounced missions to ensure strict implementation of Community texts on the free movement of persons and goods, the Council of Ministers approved the request of the Chairman of the Task Force to undertake unannounced missions. Council thus recommends to the Authority of Heads of State and Government to authorise the enhancement of the monitoring powers of the Task Force.

Item X: Any Other Business

- Request For Support For State Candidatures For Positions in International Organisations;

137. The following issues were discussed:

i. **Request by Burkina Faso for support of candidature of Mr. Brahim SANOU for the post of Vice Chair of the ITU.**

ii. **Request by Ghana**

Non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for 2020 to 2021 and the Election of Mrs. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame to the Committee of Experts of the United Nations Convention on Persons with Disability (UNCRPD)

iii. **Request by Niger for support of candidature for Non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for 2020 to 2021.**

iv. **Request by Nigeria for support of two candidatures in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**

Re-election into the Council of ITU for the term 2019 to 2022;
Presentation of Mr. William Ijeh for the post of Director of the ITU Development Bureau.

138. Council took note of the requests and directed the concerned Member States, who are yet to do so, to submit formal request to the Commission with all necessary documentation.

Item Y: Adoption of Report

139. This report was adopted after amendments.

Item Z: Closing Ceremony

140. The Chair of Council, H.E. Professor Robert Dussey, in his closing remarks thanked all the participants at the 79th Ordinary Session of Council for the spirit of camaraderie which prevailed throughout the deliberations.

141. He thereafter declared closed the 79th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and wished all participants safe trip back to their various destinations.

DONE AT ABUJA, THIS 14TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2017



H.E. PROFESSOR ROBERT DUSSEY

**CHAIRMAN
FOR COUNCIL**

COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS
DA AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES



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

**SEVENTY-NINTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

Abuja, 13 -14 December 2017

VOTE OF THANKS

Members of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers meeting in Abuja, on 13 and 14 November 2017, express their profound gratitude to His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, President of Federal Republic of Nigeria and to the Government and people of Nigeria for the warm and brotherly welcome extended them and for the excellent facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the successful conduct of their deliberations.

DONE AT ABUJA, THIS 14TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2017

COUNCIL