

**COMUNIDADE ECONOMICA DOS
ESTADOS DA AFRICA OCIDENTAL**

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES**



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

ECW/HSG/LVIII/4

Original: English

Version: Final

**FIFTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AUTHORITY OF
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

Videoconference, 23 January 2021

**FINAL REPORT OF 85TH ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

ECOWAS Commission
Videoconference, January 2021

**COMUNIDADE ECONOMICA DOS
ESTADOS DA AFRICA OCIDENTAL**

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES**



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

ECW/CM /LXXXV/29

Original: English

Date: 21 January 2021

EIGHTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Videoconference, 20 -21 January 2021

FINAL REPORT

**ECOWAS Commission
Videoconference, January 2021**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Eighty-Fifth Ordinary session of ECOWAS Council of Ministers was held via videoconference, from 20 to 21 January 2021.

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 ECOWAS Institutions and Specialised Agencies 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);
- Office of the Auditor General;

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

II. OPENING SESSION

5. In his statement, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou welcomed the Ministers and all participants to the 85th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held via videoconference and commended them for their commitment to advance the ECOWAS regional integration process.
6. President Brou then wished the participants and their families a happy new year. He also wished all ECOWAS Member States peace and prosperity. He expressed his deepest gratitude to His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, in his capacity as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, for his exemplary leadership in conducting the affairs of the Community.
7. However, President Brou deplored the difficulties experienced by the region during the year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also paid tribute to all the citizens of the Community who lost their lives, notably the Secretary-General of the Commission, Dr. Nelson Magbagbeola, who died on 7 January 2021.
8. Mr Brou reiterated the current difficult context, characterised by health and security challenges, and exacerbated by a second wave of COVID-19, which affects all ECOWAS countries. He stated that this situation offers ECOWAS Institutions the opportunity to take stock of the state of the Community as well as the various aspects relating to regional integration and the functioning of the Institutions, with emphasis on the possible responses to be provided, particularly with regard to security challenges and the issue of COVID-19 vaccine.
9. Lastly, he wished Council members successful deliberations.
10. The Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, welcomed all participants to the Eighty-Fifth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers and extended her best wishes of good health and 2021 being a fruitful year for economic recovery and development in the spate of COVID-19.
11. She on behalf of Council congratulated the immediate past Chairperson of Council, Hon Kalla Ankourao, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad, outgoing Chair of Council, for the outstanding work accomplished.

12. The Chairperson of Council offered ECOWAS heartfelt condolences to the Governments and peoples of the Republics of Ghana, Mali and Niger who lost eminent persons, namely His Excellency Jerry John Rawlings, His Excellency Moussa Traoré, His Excellency Amadou Toumani Touré, His Excellency Mamadou Tandja, His Excellency Soumaila Cissé, His Excellency Modibo Keita as well as Dr Nelson Magbagbeola, Secretary General of the ECOWAS Commission.

13. Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey noted that, following the upsurge of COVID-19 in the world and our region, robust measures and initiatives deployed have made it possible for the containment of the pandemic. She therefore congratulated the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Champion of the fight against COVID-19 for the able leadership of coordinating measures initiated at the regional level.

14. She, however, indicated that, the emergence of the second wave raises concern of health, economic and social difficulties in 2021 and urged the Council to urgently deepen reflections in order to find solutions, notably with regard to the rapid vaccination of our populations and strengthen the resilience of our countries.

15. She acknowledged the substantive efforts made by all Member States and all ECOWAS Institutions to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the region give us hope for a dynamic pursuit of our integration process in 2021. On this note of optimism, the Chairperson declared open the Eighty-fifth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and wished members every success in our deliberations.

16. The full texts of both speeches are annexed to this report.

III. ELECTION OF BUREAU

17. The following Bureau was elected:

- Chair - Republic of Ghana
- Rapporteurs - Republic of Cabo Verde;
- Republic of The Gambia;
- Republic of Niger.

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

18. The following agenda was adopted after amendments:

I. OPENING CEREMONY

- Welcome Statement by President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou;
- Opening Remarks by the Chairperson of Council and Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey.

II. CLOSE OF OPENING CEREMONY

- Housekeeping Information.

III. CLOSED DOOR SESSION

- Election of Bureau;
- Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme;

ITEMS FOR DECISION

- 1) Presentation and consideration of the 2020 Annual Report of ECOWAS;
- 2) Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Current Situation of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Access to Vaccines in the ECOWAS Region;
- 3) Presentation on the Financial Situation of the Community as at 30 November 2020;
- 4) Presentation and consideration of the Auditor General's 2020 Interim Report;
- 5) Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Request of the Federal Republic of Germany to be granted Observer Status in GIABA;
- 6) Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Status of the Digitalization of the Operations of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice;
- 7) Presentation and consideration of Report of the 39th Meeting of the Audit Committee;
- 8) Presentation and consideration of the Final Report of the 28th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;

- 9) Presentation and consideration of Status of Tasks Assigned by the 84th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers;
- 10) Presentation and consideration of draft agenda of the 58th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government;

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

- 11) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the ECOWAS Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;
- 12) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the 21st Ordinary Session of Assembly of Health Ministers of ECOWAS;
- 13) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the ECOWAS Regional Strategy for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B&C and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Key Populations;
- 14) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the West African Health Organization Institutional Data Governance and Protection Policy;
- 15) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Regional cyber security and strategy on the fight against cybercrime;
- 16) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Regional Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy;
- 17) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Gender, Women and Children on “Sexual and Gender- based Violence and the Rights of Women and Girls within the Framework of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond”;
- 18) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the joint Meeting of ECOWAS Hydrocarbons and Mines Ministers on:
 - ECOWAS Observatory and Regional Cadastre System for Geo-Extractives;
 - ECOWAS Geo-extractives Database & Statistical Information System;
 - Regional Local Content Development and Social Corporate Responsibility framework;
- 19) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Cross-border Cooperation on the 2021 Cross-border Cooperation Support Programme;

- 20) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Migration on Migration Policies and Border Management Instruments;
- 21) Presentation and Consideration of report of the 11th ECOWAS Ministers of Trade (ECOMOT) meeting and the report of the 3rd (Tripartite) Ministerial Committee on ECOWAS Common Schedule of Tariff Concessions for the AfCFTA;

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 22) Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of ECOWAS Vision 2050;
- 23) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' Applications for International and Regional Statutory positions;
- 24) Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of Forensic Audit of ECOWAS Institutions;
- 25) Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of implementation of the ECOWAS Single Currency programme and on the Status of the Payment and Settlements System;
- 26) Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of Implementation of the Africa Free Trade Zone;
- 27) Any Other Business
- 28) Adoption of Report of the Meeting;
- 29) Vote of Thanks;
- 30) Closing Session.

19. On behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E. Alassane Ouattara, a statement was made by Mr. Albert Flindé, Minister of African Integration and Ivorians Abroad. He expressed his gratitude to the Republic of Ghana for their support during the presidential election on 31 October, 2020, which was conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner. He also expressed his heartfelt thanks to all the Heads of State and Government as well as to the President of the ECOWAS Commission for the fraternal support. He further informed Council that the political dialogue initiated with all significant political parties has resulted in the signing of an agreement ahead of the legislative elections scheduled for March 6, 2021.

V. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Item 1: Presentation and consideration of the 2020 Annual Report of ECOWAS

20. Despite the two major shocks (Ebola and the security crisis), the ECOWAS region was back on the growth track (three-year average of +3.2% in 2019), thus showing its resilience.

21. However, the novel coronavirus disease N-COV 19 (COVID-19) pandemic, which broke out at the end of 2019 in China, hit the region at the end of February 2020 and spread to all member countries.

22. As at 31 December 2020, ECOWAS had **244,251 cases** or 9% of cases in Africa and **3,263 deaths** (1.34%), while **218,607 have recovered** (source WAHO).

23. The Community authorities have mobilised at the highest level to take firm and bold health and economic emergency measures to curb the spread of the pandemic in the ECOWAS region (border closures, travel bans, ban on gatherings, etc.), to care for the sick, and enhance the capacity of health facilities through the supply of critical equipment and drugs to combat the disease.

24. In appointing His Excellency Muhamadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as Champion of the COVID-19 response, the Authority of Heads of State and Government demonstrated its willingness to provide a coordinated and effective response.

25. As early as February, even before the first confirmed case was reported in our region, the West African Health Organisation brought together Member States' Ministers of Health to coordinate and harmonise a health response to the pandemic.

26. The ECOWAS Commission and WAHO successfully mobilised internal and external resources (close to US\$38 million) to increase the availability of the required medical equipment and supplies by pooling together orders distributed to Member States.

27. The Community also supported Member States' response to vulnerable populations through the distribution of food products.

28. A second wave of infection broke out again globally and in the region, compelling countries to impose new restrictions. Since December 2020 several vaccines have been developed and vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 have started. The challenges for the region are (i) availability of vaccine doses considering that richer countries have placed their orders in advance, and (ii) costs for low-income

countries such as ECOWAS Member States. ECOWAS must therefore develop a regional strategy to address the two constraints and vaccinate its populations (Commission, WAHO).

29. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's economy is not negligible. Thus, ECOWAS ended 2020 in recession, with a -1.7% growth rate. The region's budget deficit accounted for 5.3% of GDP, and overall inflation rose to 10.7%, while the debt ratio in the region reached 28.1%. All of these indicators reflected a significant deterioration compared to 2019, hence the decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government to grant Member States a waiver with regard to meeting the convergence criteria in 2020, and postpone the creation of the single currency. Accordingly, as part of the single currency, a new Convergence Pact and a new roadmap will be proposed to the Heads of State and Government in June 2021.

30. In the real sector, the disruption of global supply chains and production has led to significant drops in the quantity and value of member countries' exports. The Tourism and Transport sectors have been heavily impacted by border closures and the drastic decline in the number of travelers, thereby adversely affecting the economies of the countries that depend on them.

31. At the political level, ECOWAS Institutions supported seven (7) countries (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Togo) that held presidential and parliamentary elections. These elections consolidated the region's democratic credentials, although efforts are still needed to improve the conduct of electoral processes.

32. Technical and high-level missions were fielded for mediation efforts in Guinea-Bissau and Mali where the Chair of the Authority appointed H.E. Goodluck Johnathan, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as Special Envoy and Mediator.

33. In the area of security, ECOWAS continues to face the threat posed by terrorism, which mainly affects Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and north-eastern Nigeria, resulting in numerous civilian and military casualties and a significant increase in the number of displaced persons.

34. In 2020, ECOWAS adopted a 2020-2024 action plan to combat the scourge. Member States were called upon to reaffirm their commitment to implement the action plan and ensure its financing. Some countries have already announced their voluntary contributions, and a meeting between ECOWAS and donors has already taken place.

35. The ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) has ended, while the Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) has been extended in order to be gradually transformed into a Police Force.

36. As regards to boosting trade, the Commission finalised the texts that enabled ECOWAS Member States to join the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with its Secretariat in Accra, Ghana, which entered into force on 1st January 2021.

37. During this difficult year, ECOWAS Institutions worked together to provide Community Member States the needed support to immediately meet the emerging challenges in order to preserve the gains of regional integration, particularly in the areas of free movement of persons and goods and infrastructure development. In light of the serious financial and logistics constraints arising from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the ECOWAS Commission re-structured to virtually continue the implementation of priority projects and programmes.

38. Although the Commission's activities were significantly hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, focus was placed on priority projects and programmes immediately upon the reopening of borders.

39. Discussions on our Customs Union made it possible for ECOWAS Member States to join the African Continental Free Trade Area prior to its entry into force on 1st January 2021.

40. In the agricultural sector, the Commission continued the implementation of the ECOWAP 2025 programme and mobilised resources for agriculture adaptation to climate change. A funding of US\$493 million was mobilised to ensure the resilience of West African agri-food systems.

41. In the Infrastructure and Energy sectors, the preparation of major integration projects continued. The Joint Border Post along the Nigeria and Cameroon border was handed over to the ECOWAS Commission, while feasibility studies for the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor are ongoing. Work continued on the interconnection of power grids and construction of the WAPP Information and Coordination Centre will be completed in 2021. This will pave the way for the launch of the regional electricity market in 2021, with a US\$300 million funding from the World Bank. Important guidelines have also been adopted for the harmonisation of vehicle fuel specifications, limits for vehicle and cycle exhaust and particulate matter, and a regional strategy for the promotion of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as a source of domestic fuel. In the area of telecommunications and information technology, a regional strategy for combating cybercrime was adopted.

42. With respect to education, a new ECOWAS Nnamdi Azikiwe Academic Mobility Scheme (ENAAMS) has been prepared and will be launched in 2021 to provide hands-on experiences to young learners.

43. At the humanitarian level, ECOWAS showed solidarity to populations through the mobilisation and distribution of food and non-food items as part of emergency assistance. Efforts to assist rural women and girls in the fight against obstetric fistula continued.
44. Important institutional projects continued to be implemented, along with the development of Vision 2050 and formulation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. concerning Human Resources Management, staff skills audit and the revision of the Staff Regulations are being finalised. In the area of finance, the financial statements for fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 have been audited without reservations. Member States were urged to pay the amounts actually owe under the Community Levy for the year 2020.
45. The other ECOWAS Institutions also adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 5th Legislature was inaugurated, and Rt. Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis was elected as Speaker of Parliament. The Joint Committees examined major issues affecting the Community (AfCFTA, Food Security, Agricultural Production, COVID-19 Response, use of ICT for distance learning and training). Parliament deployed election observation missions to five countries and organised an Interparliamentary Forum on ICT.
46. Although there was no physical sitting, the Court of Justice held virtual sessions and fulfilled its mandate.
47. GIABA had the Mutual Evaluation Reports of Benin and Sierra Leone approved and continued technical assistance to Member States.
48. At the end of this typical year, the President, on behalf of the ECOWAS Commission, thanked all partners for their continued support and excellent relations with the Community, and Member States for their commitment to regional integration to promote the development of our countries and the well-being of our people.
49. Council congratulated the President of the Commission on the quality of the report presented as well as the progress made by Community Institutions despite the challenges facing the region in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Council thereafter adopted the 2020 Annual Report and the recommendations contained therein. Council also directed the ECOWAS Commission to ensure diligent implementation of the recommendations and further reaffirmed its determination to support efforts to fight terrorism in the region, particularly in the Sahel.



Item 2: Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Current Situation of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Access to Vaccines in the ECOWAS Region;

50. In this memorandum presented by the Director General of WAHO, Professor Stanley Okolo, Council was updated on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in the ECOWAS region. As at 14 January, 2021, 46 weeks after the first case was confirmed in Lagos, Nigeria, the region had recorded a cumulative total of 275,299 cases with 237,767 recoveries and 3,568 deaths. 91% of these cases were in eight Member States – Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, Guinea, Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso and Mali in that order. The region is now experiencing a second wave of the pandemic with much higher levels of transmission than in the first wave, but without any apparent increase in case fatality rates.

51. To contain the pandemic, Member States and WAHO in collaboration with partners have been implementing adaptive multipronged response strategies. Critical to the success of response effort is preventing infection through public compliance with non-pharmaceutical measures of hand washing, wearing of masks, and social distancing.

52. At regional level, WAHO continues to lead on coordination, collaboration and communication between Member States and with partners, mobilization of resources and provision of critical medical materials, online capacity building and technical advice from embedded WAHO staff. WAHO had also set up a multi-disciplinary COVID-19 Taskforce tasked with developing strategies for regional access to anti-COVID vaccines in the short term and regional production of such vaccines in the medium to long term. Key partners that have provided financial and/or technical support to ECOWAS and WAHO in the COVID-19 response were recognized in the report. The ECOWAS COVID-19 Champion, H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria has provided logistics support in the form of free warehouse storage and provision of aircrafts for distribution of critical medical materials to member States.

53. On the issue of anti-COVID vaccines, Council was appraised of the various candidate vaccines that had received Emergency Use License from World Health Organization (WHO) or the Food and Drug Administration of the United States, and those that had completed the full clinical trials and were awaiting licensing. In line with WHO recommendation, the region should aim to vaccinate at least 50% of our population, with priority given to frontline healthcare workers (3% of population), older adults over 60 years (7%), adults with co-morbidities (15%), and essential services personnel (25%). All ECOWAS Member States were signed up to the global COVAX facility which is hosted by GAVI alliance and is expected to provide free



vaccines for 20 % of the target population in 92 low and middle income countries, starting in the first quarter of 2021. Since most of the current vaccines require two doses, the task is for the region to secure and fund, within the next 6-9 months, about 240 million doses of vaccines required for the remaining 30% of our population at an indicative minimum cost of about nine hundred million US dollars for vaccines alone.

54. Council was invited to approve the following recommendations:
- (a) Member States should recommit to regional solidarity and the principle of coordination, collaboration and communication; and all unused COVID-19 funds at WAHO should be carried over to the COVID-19 response for 2021.
 - (b) Approve the harmonized ECOWAS Protocol for Cross Border Movement of persons and goods during the pandemic; in addition to capping the cost of Covid-19 PCR **“test for travel within the region” at \$50** only as agreed by the Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Health
 - (c) The region should utilize a pooled procurement approach for anti-COVID vaccines and ECOWAS Commission should set up a Vaccines Revolving Fund for this purpose to which National Governments, Development Banks, the private sector and partners should be invited to contribute. This fund will be used to secure anti-COVID vaccines in the region, through short term pooled procurement and medium to long term regional manufacture.
 - (d) ECOWAS Commission and WAHO in collaboration with Member States should lead the process of sourcing of 240 million doses of preferably WHO approved vaccines through direct and collaborative approaches to manufacturers, partners and friendly foreign governments that may be willing to sell extra doses they may have pre-purchased. The harmonized ECOWAS Medicines Registration platform, led by the National Medicines Registration Authorities of Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Nigeria, should be used to ensure these vaccines are registered in Member States within 14 days of being available.
 - (e) A COVID-19 Donor Working Group should be established immediately after the upcoming 58th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority to undertake the fund raising campaign, and eminent Community citizens should be appointed as Investment Champions to support the campaign.
 - (f) Nigeria pledges to continue supporting WAHO in the COVID-19 response efforts through provision of logistics assistance.

55. After deliberations, Council adopted the report and all the recommendations contained therein.

Item 3: Presentation and Consideration on Report of the Financial Situation of the Community as 30 November 2020

56. The Commission presented the report on the financial situation of the Community as at 30th November 2020. It informed that the Council of Ministers, during its 83rd Ordinary Session held from 17 to 19 December 2019 in Abuja, approved the budget of ECOWAS Institutions for the financial year 2020 in the amount of UA 399,499,261, balanced in revenue and expenditure.

57. Taking into account the negative effects of Covid-19 on the mobilization of revenue, namely those from the Community Levy, the approved budget was revised downwards representing UA 25,842,796 (-6.5%) to UA 373,656,465 by the 84th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, held on 4 and 5 September 2020 in Niamey, Republic of Niger. This revised income estimate affected the item "Community Levy" whose budgeted amount was reduced by 11.7%, that is, to UA 195 110 302 against UA 220 953 098 initially budgeted, and Year-End Bank Balances whose budgeted amount was increased to UA 26 919 297. On the expenditure side, only the item relating to Institutions' expenditure, was reduced by 7.5% to UA 318 562 741 as against UA 344 405 537.

Table 1: Approved ECOWAS 2020 Budget versus Revised Budget

DESCRIPTION	Approved Budget		Revised Budget	
	In UA	In %	In UA	In %
REVENUE	399 499 261	100.0%	373 656 465	100.0%
Community Levy	220 953 098	55.3%	168 191 005	45.0%
Year-End Bank Balances	0	0.0%	26 919 297	7.2%
Community Levy in Arrears	60 894 454	15.2%	60 894 454	16.3%
Contributions in Arrears	1,768,710	0.4%	1,768,710	0.5%
Other Revenue	179 545	0.0%	179 545	0.0%
External Funds	115 703 454	29.0%	115 703 454	31.0%
EXPENSES	399 499 261	100.0%	373 656 465	100.0%
Institutions	344 405 537	86.2%	318 562 741	85.3%
Statutory Obligations	11 307 660	2.8%	11 307 660	3.0%
Special Programs and Interventions in Member States	12 050 322	3.0%	12 050 322	3.2%
Peace and Security	31 735 742	7.9%	31 735 742	8.5%



58. In terms of structure, revenue from the Community Levy remains the main source of ECOWAS financing representing 68.5% of the revised budget. On the expenditure side, the largest share (85.3%) continues to be reserved for the Institutions.

59. The Commission also informed that as at 30th November, 2020, a total amount of UA 212,486,290 had been mobilised, that is, a mobilisation rate of 56.9% of which:

- (i) UA 71,095,885 as Community Levy, that is a mobilisation rate of 42.3%;
- (ii) UA 44,674,062 from external funds in favour of the Commission (UA 30,308,168), WAHO (UA 14,200,832) and GIABA (UA 165,062);
- (iii) UA 328,182 as other revenues, corresponding to the mobilisation rate of 182.8%.

Table 2: Implementation of the Revised Budget

DESCRIPTION	Revised Budget		
	<i>Envisaged</i>	<i>Executed</i>	<i>Mobilization Rate</i>
REVENUE	373 656 465	212 486 290	56.9%
Community Levy	195 110 302	71 095 885	36.4%
Year-End Bank Balances	0	96 388 161	
Community Levy in Arrears	60 894 454	0	0.0%
Contributions in Arrears	1,768,710	0	0.0%
Other Revenue	179 545	328 182	182.8%
External Funds	115 703 454	44 674 062	38.6%
EXPENSES	373 656 465	104 575 192	28.0%
Institutions	318 562 741	98 781 930	31.0%
Statutory Obligations	11 307 660	1,223 371	10.8%
Special Programs and Interventions in Member States	12 050 322	0	0.0%
Peace and Security	31 735 742	4 569 891	14.4%
BALANCE	0	123 784 831	

60. On the expenditure side, only 28.0% of the anticipated expenses were made, that is, UA 104,575 192 against UA 373,656,465, of which UA 98,781,930 for institutions, UA 1,223,371 for statutory obligations and UA 4,569,891 for peace and security.

61. The report also highlighted the absorption capacity of Institutions (actual expenditure vs actual income). Details are as follows:

Table 3: Revised 2020 Budget Implementation Rates of Institutions

INSTITUTIONS	INCOME	EXPENDITURE
Commission	35.1%	27.4%
Parliament	29.0%	42.8%
Court	62.1%	61.7%
WAHO	45.5%	31.4%
GIABA	60.0%	44.2%
Auditor General	20.5%	20.5%

62. After clarifications sought, the Commission assured Council that the figures for receipts of community levy would be harmonised and related high level missions will be fielded as soon as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic eases.

Item 4: Presentation and Consideration of Auditor General's 2020 Interim Report

63. The Auditor General (AG) of Community Institutions, Dr. Alfred M. Braimah presented the 2020 Half-Year Report to the 85th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers in accordance with Regulations CREG/17/2017 establishing the Office of the Auditor General (OAG). The Report was presented in two parts, Part A and Part B.

64. Part A reported on the Summary of Observations of all Audits, Inspections and Investigations covering all Institutions, Agencies and Presidents Representation Offices except for PPDU and ARAA with an **overall Audit Opinion of Limited Assurance**. The community-wide risk implications indicated a high incidence of Non-Compliance with Community Laws and Regulations which require immediate remedial actions by Management. On the implementation of recommendations, the AG highlighted progress made by ECREEE in significantly improving the level of compliance with Community Supplementary Acts, Directives and Regulations, Risk Assessment and the Effectiveness and Efficiency of operations and controls.

65. The AG also updated Council on the status of ceding-off Control responsibility to Management. He informed Council that Three (3) out of Sixteen (16) Control Roles were handed over to Management in 2019 and made specific recommendations for Management action to facilitate full handing over. On the ceding of control to Management, the AG presented a timetable for the progressive handing over of this function to Management by the 30th of June 2021. This handing over date was approved by Council in their 84th session. The AG further emphasized the need for Management to implement Council Directives such as urgent recruitment of staff for the OAG, recruitment of critical staff for all other Institutions, Offices and Agencies especially Finance, General Administration & Conferences and Human Resources

Department as well as ERCA and ECREEE. He also emphasized the need to fast-track the recruitment of key staff for WAHO and in particular, the Regional Center for Surveillance and Disease Control (RCSDC).

66. Part B reported on the Income & Expenditure, Community levy & Contribution Arrears, Community Financial Trends and Staffing Analysis of the Commission. On Income and Expenditure, 17% of income was mobilized against budget, with the largest proportion coming from Community Levy with the expenditure execution rate being 13% against budget. However, against opening Cash Balances and Community Levy receipts by the Institutions, an expenditure execution rate of 49% was achieved. This indicates that with higher levels of Community Levy receipts, a higher level of expenditure execution can be expected. The AG explained that the rather low performance in the half-year is largely attributable to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic which led to the suspension of several programmes, reduced levels of Community Levy paid and savings from meetings held virtually instead of physically.

67. On Staffing, staff representation per Member State, Gender Balance and Staff Age Analysis were reported on. The Male-Female ratio is 72:28 which as compared to AfDB of 70:30 shows good effort in the right direction. Focus on recruitment of staff in the age category of 20-29 and promotion of high performing G- staff into the P1 grade in line with the Staff Regulations was also recommended.

68. Council considered and approved the report of the Auditor General and directed Management to take the necessary steps to:

- i. implement all Directives contained in their 2018, 2019 and 2020 sessions, by the end of December 2021.
- ii. ensure on-going compliance with Supplementary Acts, Directives and Regulations by the end of September 2021. This may involve capacity building of staff and the use of rewards and sanctions to motivate staff at all levels.
- iii. collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General, to take over the management of the Control Function by the end of June 2021.
- iv. in collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General, to implement Council Directive to set up and fully resource the Post-Compliance Division with four (4) staff to take over the management of the Control Function by the end of June 2021.

69. Following clarifications sought on the issues of recruitment and the staff skills audit by Council, the Commission indicated that COVID-19 pandemic affected all

related actions. The Commission assured Council that critical and urgent recruitment for the Office of the Auditor General, the Finance Department, Conference Division, Language Services and Procurement, ERCA, WAHO, and ECREEE would continue whilst other recruitments would halt till the completion of the Staff Skills Audit which would be concluded in February, 2021.

70. Council thereafter adopted the Auditor General's 2020 interim report and the recommendations contained therein.

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of Report of the 39th Meeting of the Audit Committee

71. Mr. Aharh-Kpessou Mongo, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the summary report of the fortieth, forty-first and forty-second meetings of the Audit Committee.

72. The following main items were discussed:

- a) Status of implementation of the 2020 budget of the Office of the Auditor General;
- b) Draft 2021 budget of the Office of the Auditor General;
- c) Auditor General's 2020 half-year report;
- d) Renewal of External Auditor's contract to audit the 2020 and 2021 financial statements;
- e) ERERA's financial statements for the fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- f) Status of implementation of recommendations of audits carried out by the External Auditor and the Office of the Auditor General in Institutions and Agencies;
- g) Audit Report of the ECOWAS Permanent Representation in The Gambia and ECOMIG;
- h) Recommendations of the Audit Committee to the Council of Ministers.

73. At the end of the presentation, the Audit Committee made the following recommendations to the Council of Ministers for onwards submission to the Authority of Heads of State and Government, for adoption:

- a. Instruct Management to complete without delay and no later than April 2021, the recruitment process to adequately staff the Office of the Auditor General. It should be recalled that the Council of Ministers gave clear directives to

Management to recruit staff for the newly-created OAG in July 2018. More than two (2) years later, no recruitment was made;

- b. Instruct Management to complete without delay and no later than June 2021, the recruitment process with a view to adequately staff the Departments of Finance, Administration and Human Resources with the needed and appropriate personnel to ensure the smooth functioning of all ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies. To this end, Management shall submit an electronic timetable to the Council of Ministers no later than 15th February, 2021;
 - c. Instruct Management to implement all the directives contained in the reports of the 83rd and 84th sessions of the Council of Ministers relating to the devolution of control functions;
 - d. Instruct Management to prepare a policy document on "Gender and Youth" to facilitate the integration of women and young people into ECOWAS;
 - e. Adopt the draft 2021 budget of the Office of the Auditor General;
 - f. Approve the financial statements for the fiscal years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 of the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA);
 - g. Approve the renewal of the contract of PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Ghana for a final period of two years, to enable it to carry out audits of the financial statements for the fiscal years 2020 and 2021 of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies, bring its total term to six (6) years in accordance with Article 75 of the revised Treaty;
 - h. Take note of the Audit Reports of DELOITTE Nigeria and instruct the relevant institutions, namely, the ECOWAS Permanent Representation in The Gambia and ECOMIG, to immediately commence the implementation of the firm's recommendations;
 - i. Approve the 2020 half-year report of the Office of the Auditor General.
74. Council commended the Audit Committee for the quality of the report and thereafter adopted it and the recommendations contained therein.

Item 6: Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Request of the Federal Republic of Germany to be granted Observer Status in GIABA

75. Mr. Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, Minister of Interior of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chair of the 22nd session of the GIABA Ministerial Committee (GMC) presented the memorandum on the request of the Federal Republic of Germany to be granted Observer Status in GIABA, in line with Article 5 of the GIABA Statute.

76. The Minister highlighted the economic strengths of Germany, including the country's efforts in Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT). The country is a founding member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and currently holds the chairmanship of the organisation for a second-year term. The Minister further highlighted the assistance received by GIABA Member States through GIZ, and the benefits expected from its observer status. The benefits include cooperation with GIABA and Member States on AML/CFT matters, particularly with regard to mutual evaluation processes, technical discussions on mutual evaluation reports, sharing of information and expertise, and provision of targeted technical assistance.

77. Council endorsed the memorandum and recommended same to the Authority of Heads of State and Government, for adoption.

Item 7: Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on the Status of the Digitalization of the Operations of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice;

78. The President of the Community Court of Justice made a presentation on progress in the digitalization of the Court and the next steps requiring approval by the Council of Ministers. He reported that an amount of USD 345,126 had been invested in the acquisition of IT equipment for the digitalization of Court sessions and Court-related operations.

79. To enable the Court to fully benefit from the investment in the digitalization project, in particular, to speed up the process of adjudicating cases and cutting down operational cost and legal fees, approval is sought for the (i) purchase of additional IT equipment, (ii) use of external IT services, and (iii) modification of the approved organogram moving two legal staff positions to IT staff positions.

80. After extensive deliberations, Council commended the Court for its effort on digitalization of its judicial operations. However, on the recruitment of additional two IT specialists, which were not originally on the approved organogram, Council deferred the request until the conclusion of the Staff Skills Audit. Council further urged the Court to use its three IT specialists in the current approved organogram pending the recruitment of the additional staff as the issue of adjustment of the

organogram should be done holistically to include all Community Institutions and Specialised Agencies.

Item 8: Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 28th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

81. The final report of the 28th meeting of the AFC was presented by the Mr. Mohammed Nurudeen Ismaila who chaired the meeting. The report covered the following:

- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the 27th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of the Annual Performance Report of the Community Institutions: January – September 2020;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Memorandum on Digitalization of Operations of the ECOWAS Court of Justice;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of the Community Levy Report;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Memorandum on the Revision of Remuneration of Eminent Persons;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Report on the Revised 2020 Budget Implementation;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of Memorandum on the Creation of Four (4) Positions for the Regional Programme for the Integrated Development of the Fouta Djallon Highlands;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of the 2021 Draft Consolidated Budget of ECOWAS Institutions ;
- ❖ Presentation of the Auditor General's 2020 Interim Report;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Status of Interviews of G Staff by the Special Panel;

- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Status of Conversion of Contract Staff to Permanent Staff;
- ❖ Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Status of Staff Skills Audit;
- ❖ Presentation and consideration of a Memorandum on Status of Recruitment of Staff;
- ❖ Harmonization of COVID-19 Tests and Charges across the ECOWAS Region.

82. After the presentation and ensuing deliberations, Council adopted the report and all the recommendations contained therein. It also commended the President of the Commission on the suspension of the recruitment exercise in all institutions pending the conclusion and implementation of the Staff Skills Audit Report. Council approved the following;

- a. Revision of remuneration of eminent persons as follows.
 - i. Lump sum of US\$3000 per mission and per diem of US\$1500 for a former President/Head of State/Prime Minister/Vice President.
 - ii. Per diem of US\$314 for each of the two accompanying aides of the former President/Head of State/Prime Minister/Vice President.
 - iii. Lump sum of US\$1000 per mission and per diem of US\$1000 for former Senate President/Speaker of House Representatives/Chief Justice of a Member State's Supreme Court; and
 - iv. Per diem of US\$314 for one accompanying aide of the former Senate President/Speaker of House Representatives/Chief Justice of a Member State's Supreme Court.

83. Finally, Council approved the 2021 budget of the Community in the total sum of UA 398,044,626 as presented in the tables below:

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF 2021 INCOME BUDGET OF THE COMMUNITY

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Community Levy	185,739,379	185,739,379	0	0.0%
Year-End Bank Balances	20,084,507	20,084,507		
Arrears of Community Levy	75,894,454	75,894,454	0	0.0%
Arrears of Contribution	1,768,710	1,768,710	0	0.0%
Other Income	350,194	350,194	0	0.0%

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
External Funding	114,207,382	114,207,382	0	0.0%
TOTAL	398,044,626	398,044,626	0	0.0%

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF 2021 EXPENDITURE BUDGET OF THE COMMUNITY

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Community Institutions	319,316,490	319,316,490	0	0%
Statutory Obligations	11,711,966	11,711,966	0	0%
Special Programmes in Member States	36,702,319	36,702,319	0	0%
Peace & Security	30,313,851	30,313,851	0	0%
TOTAL	398,044,626	398,044,626	0	0.0%

TABLE 6 : SUMMARY OF 2021 BUDGET OF INSTITUTIONS

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
ECOWAS Commission	221,989,419	221,818,333	-171,086	-0.08%
ECOWAS Parliament	20,397,075	20,397,075	0	0%
Community Court of Justice	16,417,048	16,417,048	0	0%
West African Health Organization (WAHO)	43,179,200	43,350,286	171,086	0.3%
Inter-Governmental Action-Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA)	10,251,356	10,251,356	0	0%
Office of the Auditor General	7,082,392	7,082,392	0	0%
TOTAL	319,316,490	319,316,490	0	0%

TABLE 7: SUMMARY OF 2021 BUDGET OF STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Chairman of Authority (0.5% of Member State's Community Levy)	439,803	439,803	0	0%
Chairman of Authority (UA 1,200,000)	1,200,000	1,200,000	0	0%
ECOWAS National Unit (4.5% of Community Levy)	10,072,163	10,072,163	0	0%
TOTAL	11,711,966	11,711,966	0	0%

**TABLE 8: SUMMARY OF 2021 BUDGET OF SPECIAL
PROGRAMMES/INTERVENTION IN MEMBER STATES**

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
ECOWAS Regional Food & Agricultural Fund	2,000,000	2,000,000	0	0%
ECOWAS Regional Food Reserve	1,000,000	1,000,000	0	0%
Rural Electrification & LPG Initiative	2,100,841	2,100,841	0	0%
ECOWAS Trade Fair	615,322	615,322	0	0%
ECOWAS Regional Training Center, Lome	500,000	500,000	0	0%
ECOWAS Logistics Depot (Lungi)	6,622,679	6,622,679	0	0%
Construction of new Headquarters	13,795,620	13,795,620	0	0%
Youth Entrepreneurship in ICT	931,971	931,971	0	0%
Water Projects in Rural Areas	700,000	700,000	0	0%
Special Projects - General Administration & Conference	8,435,886	8,435,886	0	0%
TOTAL	36,702,319	36,702,319	0	0%

TABLE 9: SUMMARY OF 2020 BUDGET OF PEACE & SECURITY

	COMMUNITY PROPOSAL	AFC RECOMMENDATION	VARIANCE	
	UA	UA	AMOUNT	%
Peace Fund	6,700,000	6,700,000	0	0%
ECOMIB	621,455	621,455	0	0%
ECOMIG	3,911,347	3,911,347	0	0%
International Coordination Center (ICC)	17,855,586	17,855,586	0	0%
AFISMA	1,225,463	1,225,463	0	0%
TOTAL	30,313,851	30,313,851	0	0%

84. The ratios relating to the draft 2021 budget of Institutions of the Community are as follows:

Administrative Cost : 26%

Programme Cost : 74%

Item 9: Presentation and Consideration of Status of Tasks Assigned by the 84th Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers

85. A total of fifteen (15) tasks were assigned by the 84th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers to the ECOWAS Commission, Institutions and Specialised Agencies. The overall execution rate for these tasks is 56.6%.

86. The main challenges experienced in the execution of tasks assigned by the 84th Council relate to the impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the approved 2020 work programme for the ECOWAS Commission, as well as Institutions and Specialised Agencies. In specific cases, the low execution of assigned tasks was also attributable to lack of adequate staffing, delays in procurement, payment to suppliers and in concluding negotiations with partners.

87. Following clarifications sought, Council took note of the presentation and requested the Commission to accelerate progress in key tasks.

Item 10: Presentation and Consideration draft agenda of 58th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government

88. The President of the Commission presented the draft agenda of the 58th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

89. After presentation and amendments, Council adopted the draft agenda annexed to this report.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

Item 11: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the ECOWAS Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

90. In his presentation, Professor George Yaw Gyan Baffour, Minister for Planning of the Republic of Ghana and Chairperson of the meeting indicated that acting on the recommendation of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers at its 78th Ordinary Session in June, 2017, on the need to establish a much stronger Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) function for the Community, the ECOWAS Commission launched the process to develop the regional Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. The development of this policy followed a participatory approach, which allowed the process to take into account the views and contributions of stakeholders across board. The final draft of the policy was reviewed and validated by the Ministers of Planning of the Member States at a virtual meeting held on 12th January, 2021. The main objective of the sectorial ministerial meeting was to validate the draft ECOWAS Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and recommend it to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for approval.

91. Following the presentation made to the ECOWAS Commission on the draft ECOWAS M&E Policy, the meeting of the sectorial Ministers on the ECOWAS M&E Policy agreed on the following:

- a. The decision by the ECOWAS Commission to put in place an M&E Policy is commendable and timely.
- b. Overall, the Policy should be a concise document with the details of its operationalization spelt out in the M&E Manual.
- c. The scope of the Policy should be limited to ECOWAS programmes and projects implemented at national and regional levels.

92. In order to effectively operationalise the ECOWAS M&E Policy, the meeting made the following recommendations to the ECOWAS Commission:

- a. Digitalisation of M&E operations.
- b. Ensure an independent and well-resourced M&E function.
- c. Involvement of national M&E experts in M&E Capacity building plan of the ECOWAS Commission.
- d. Timely review and development of an updated ECOWAS M&E Manual.
- e. Put in place an information sharing mechanism for the effective flow of M&E data from Member States to the ECOWAS Commission.

93. Conclusively, the sectorial Ministerial Meeting on ECOWAS Monitoring and Evaluation Policy hereby invites the Meeting of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to approve.

94. Following presentation, Council endorsed report and its related policy for onward transmission for the adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 12: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the 21st Ordinary Session of Assembly of Health Ministers of ECOWAS

95. The Director General of WAHO, Professor Stanley Okolo, presented this report. He confirmed that the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers (AHM) of ECOWAS was held virtually on 4th August 2020 under the chairmanship of Dr Idi Mainassara, Minister of Health of the Republic of Niger and Chair of the AHM. The AHM was attended by the Ministers of Health of all 15 Member States of ECOWAS or their duly authorized representatives.

96. He reported that the AHM received and discussed the health situation in the region, the main programmatic achievements of WAHO and the financial performance of the institution. The 2019 Annual Health Report presented by WAHO as well as presentations and recommendations from the Committee of Health Experts were discussed and adopted by the AHM. These documents are on the agenda of the 85th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.

97. The Ministers of Health were also addressed by Dr. Berkley, the CEO of GAVI who discussed current initiatives underway as part of efforts to expedite equitable access to quality COVID-19 vaccines for the region including plans to supply two billion doses of vaccines to low income countries by the end of 2021. The Ministers of

Health affirmed the region's interest in accessing the vaccine that would complete the phase 3 of the clinical trials and emphasized the importance of ensuring equity in access to quality COVID-19 vaccines in the region.

98. After presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 13: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the ECOWAS Regional Strategy for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B&C and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Key Populations

99. The Director General of WAHO, Professor Stanley Okolo, presented this memorandum. He confirmed that the resolution on the Regional Strategy for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B&C and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Key Population's was adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers (AHM) of ECOWAS held virtually on 4th August, 2020 under the chairmanship of Dr Idi Mainassara, Minister of Health of the Republic of Niger and Chair of the AHM.

100. He reported that the Regional Strategy for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B&C and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Key Populations was developed by WAHO through a process coordinated by a technical working group and validated by the regional committee of experts. The purpose of the strategy was to create an enabling legal, social and economic environment in ECOWAS which will subsequently facilitate access to HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and C and SRH services that are comprehensive and designed to meet the needs of each key population sub-group.

101. The Council endorsed the report and the recommendations contained therein.

Item 14: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the West African Health Organization Institutional Data Governance and Protection Policy

102. The Director General of WAHO presented the memorandum on Institutional Policy on Governance and Health Data Protection. He confirmed the resolution was presented to the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers (AHM) of ECOWAS held virtually on 4 August 2020 under the chairmanship of Dr. Idi Mainassara, Minister of Health of the Republic of Niger and Chair of the AHM.

103. He stated that the resolution is part of the broader framework for the strategic management of health information within WAHO, its partners and more importantly, the ECOWAS region. The Policy is a fundamental document which articulates WAHO's strategic vision for health information systems hinged on the Regional Health Data Warehouse (RHDW) set up at WAHO in 2014 using DHIS 2 technology and aims to ensure availability and accessibility of quality health information for informed decision-making regarding the quality of health service provision in the ECOWAS region.

104. The Council endorsed the report and recommended it for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 15: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Regional Cyber Security and Strategy on the fight against Cybercrime

105. The Minister for Communications of Ghana, presented the Memorandum on Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime strategy adopted by the 17th Meeting of Ministers in charge of Telecommunications/TIC and Post held virtually on 26th November, 2020.

106. The Minister recalled that the rapid digital transformation underway in West Africa is of great importance to improving among others the functioning and efficiency of administrations, and economies, as well as the well-being of populations. However, the growing threats and risks facing the global cyberspace can significantly reduce the expected benefits of digitalization.

107. The context of the development and adoption of the Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime strategy is characterized by the increasing level of interconnection of today's world more than ever before thanks to the Internet. This have created a conducive environment for cyber-attacks to occur rapidly and spread across the globe without regard to borders, geography, or national jurisdictions.

108. To answer these challenges and those imposed by the borderless nature of cybercrime and to achieve cybersecurity worldwide calls for the establishment of national cybersecurity strategies including mechanisms to identify, manage and respond to cyber threats as well as cooperation between countries at regional and international levels is crucial.

109. In order to ensure a coordinated regional approach to dealing with cybercrime issues, the ECOWAS Commission launched an ECOWAS Cybersecurity Agenda intended to support and secure the common digital market for growth in West Africa.

110. The Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime strategy developed in the context of the regional approach and coordination include the following provisions:

- i. Improve the level of national cybersecurity and cybercrime mechanisms;
- ii. Encourage cooperation and mutual assistance between Member States;
- iii. Establish a national cybersecurity Authority as well as alert and incident response capabilities (Computer Security Incident Response Team: CSIRTs), establish risk management approach;
- iv. Enhance cybersecurity skills and capacities against cybercrime;
- v. Reduce cybercrime incidents with an enabled environment and capability to bring perpetrators to justice;
- vi. Promote regional and international coordination and cooperation in enhancing cybersecurity and fighting cybercrime.

111. In conclusion the Minister invited the Council to adopt the Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime strategy.

112. Council adopted the Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime strategy.

Item 16: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on Regional Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy

113. The Minister for Communications of Ghana, presented the Memorandum on Regional Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy adopted by the 17th Meeting of Ministers in charge of Telecommunications/TIC Post held virtually on 26th November 2020.

114. The Minister recalled that today, increased interconnectedness and reliance on the internet gives way to an environment where cyber-attacks can occur rapidly. The resilience and security of critical infrastructure and essential services can be affected by a variety of risks and threats (breakdowns, accidents, malicious acts, physical or digital attacks, natural disasters, pandemics, etc.) which can have a serious impact on a nation.

115. The Critical Infrastructure include among other facilities, equipment and data of Government activities, transport, energy, water and sanitation, electronic, industry and health sectors.

116. To ensure a coordinated regional approach to dealing with cybersecurity and cybercrime issues, the ECOWAS Commission launched an ECOWAS Cybersecurity Agenda intended to support and secure the common digital market for growth in West Africa. The Agenda aims to increase cyber resilience in the region and build confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

117. In the context of the implementation of this Agenda, the *Regional Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy*, was developed and adopted by the Ministers in charge of Telecommunications/TIC Post on 26th November, 2020.

118. The provisions of the infrastructure protection policy;

- i) Allow for the investigation, detection and prosecution of criminal offences;
- ii) Set the framework that Member States should adopt to ensure the protection of their critical infrastructures and essential services;
- iii) Outline the roles of Operators in Member States;
- iv) Provide elements of methodology and criteria to identify the infrastructures and services concerned in the various sectors and obligations of stakeholders;
- v) Propose a list of preventive, reactive and proactive measures that can be implemented and sanctions for non-compliance of protection measures;
- vi) Provide the principles and modalities of cooperation between States with interdependence in critical infrastructures or essential services;
- vii) Propose a list of infrastructures and services that may be classified as critical based on proposed set of standard criteria.

119. In conclusion the Minister invited Council to adopt the Regional Critical Infrastructure Projection Policy.

120. Council adopted the Regional Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy.

Item 17: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Gender, Women and Children on “Sexual and Gender- based Violence and the Rights of Women and Girls within the Framework of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond”

121. The representative of the Minister in charge of Gender of the Republic of Ghana, Dr Afisah Zakariah, presented the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Gender, Women and Children was held virtually from 8th to 9th October,

2020, under the theme: “Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and the Rights of Women and Girls within the Framework of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond.” The Ministers examined and adopted the report of the Experts’ Meeting which was held from 5th to 7th October, 2020. The purpose of the Ministerial meeting was to examine the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on women, girls and children, particularly in terms of sexual and gender-based violence, and to build consensus on the way forward to adequately address this issue.

122. The Ministers committed themselves to ensuring the mobilization of the needed resources as well as the engagement and inclusion of all relevant influencers to ensure the protection of girls and women and to eliminate gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, harmful practices such as Child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting within COVID-19 response plans and beyond, including continued support to survivors in conflict and non-conflict situations as well as in humanitarian settings.

123. The Ministers further considered and endorsed the Draft Declaration of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on “Zero Tolerance to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against women and Girls at all times and Circumstances within the ECOWAS Region”.

124. The proposed Draft Declaration reaffirms the commitment of the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-based Violence and the Elimination of all Violence against Women and Girls as a matter of utmost priority; and to effectively implement, review and/or strengthen appropriate laws, policies, programmes and innovative interventions across all critical sectors in the prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence. The Declaration also pledges the commitment of the Heads of State and Government to promote cooperation and collaboration across national frontiers between ECOWAS Member States as well as third countries for preventing and addressing Sexual and Gender-based Violence and the Elimination of all Violence against Women and Girls.

125. Council endorsed the Report as well as the draft declaration and recommended their adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 18: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the joint Meeting of ECOWAS Hydrocarbons and Mines Ministers

126. The Senior Minister and Minister of Petroleum Resources of Niger, Hon. Foumakoye Gado, Chair of the Joint meeting of ECOWAS Member States' Ministers of Mines and of Hydrocarbons, presented the report of the meeting held in Niamey, Niger on 29 October 2020. The meeting reviewed three documents, namely:

- (i) **Development of an ECOWAS Geo-Extractive Database & Statistical Information Framework:** the document will provide a harmonised framework to guide reporting of progress along the value chains in the Community's geo-extractive sector (mining and hydrocarbon).
- (ii) **Establishment of an ECOWAS Geo-Extractive Observatory and Cadastre System:** it will provide a single repository of real-time information in a regional geo-spatial information system, to anchor development and investment promotion in the Community's geo-extractive sector. The mining cadastre will provide the region with the needed tools to better understand its mapping and mining and oil potentials. It will allow Member States to be autonomous and better prepared for future transactions and negotiations.
- (iii) **ECOWAS Directive on corporate social responsibility, localisation and local content development:** the Directive seeks to ensure an inclusive participation of citizens in the mining and hydrocarbon sector and develop effective links across the related industry's sub-sectors. It outlines the profiles of good local development and emphasises corporate social responsibility to local communities. It will reverse the current trends by giving Member States the priority to develop local content policies for the benefit of the population (jobs, human resources, suppliers, purchases and provision of services, access to funding, etc...) and compel businesses to make social investments in the areas affected by mining and oil sites.

127. The three documents, which will all be regional directives, have undergone extensive reviews by Member States' experts during validation workshops. The sector Ministers adopted the three Community documents and subsequently recommended their endorsement by ECOWAS governing bodies.

128. The Council of Ministers welcomed the adoption of the three above-mentioned documents.

129. After its consideration of the report of sector Ministers and also taking into account the ECOWAS Parliament's resolution (which gave a favourable opinion to the adoption of the three documents at its videoconference session held on 16 January 2021), the Council of Ministers endorsed the report and the resulting decisions. Thus, the Council of Ministers adopted the following documents on:

- ✓ **Development of an ECOWAS Geo-Extractive Database & Statistical Information Framework;**
- ✓ **Establishment of an ECOWAS Geo-Extractive Observatory and Cadastre System;**
- ✓ **ECOWAS Directive on corporate social responsibility, localisation and local content development.**

130. The Council of Ministers recommends the adoption of the three documents by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 19: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Cross-border Cooperation on the 2021-2025 Cross-Border Cooperation Support Programme

131. The ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) held a meeting via Video Conference on Thursday 22nd October, 2020 to discuss matters relating to the development of the ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation Support Programme (ECBCSP) 2021-2025 and also consider and endorse the Report of the Meeting of Sectoral Experts which was prior held via video conference on 10th September, 2020.

132. The Report of the Experts highlighted that following implementation of a Pilot Operation Phase of the Programme from 2009 – 2013, where significant gains have been made in terms of setting up of Programme Operational Structures, Identification of Cross-Border Priority Projects and elaboration of a Regional Financing Mechanism and Programme Operational Tools for effective management supervision and Monitoring and Evaluation. It is in this vein that a new Programme Operational Cycle has been developed for full implementation in all fifteen (15) ECOWAS Member States.

133. The new Programme called the ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation Support Programme (ECBCSP) 2021-2025 and its Regional Financing Mechanism, the ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation and Free Movement and Migration (CBC-FMM) Fund and Programme Operational Tools, designed for implementation over a 5 Year period, was validated at Experts Level in September 2020 and subsequently adopted at Ministerial Level in October 2020 by ECOWAS Ministers in Charge of Cross-Border Cooperation.

134. Council endorsed the report and recommended it for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 20: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Migration-on-Migration Policies and Border Management Instruments

135. The Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement of the ECOWAS Commission Mr Tei Konzi, presented the Report on behalf of the Minister of Interior of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Mr. Rauf Aregbesola who chaired the 4th Annual Migration Dialogue in West Africa (MIDWA) Ministerial Meeting which convened virtually on 24th of July, 2020. He indicated that the meeting was to ensure the involvement of Member States at the highest level in the implementation of regional legal instruments relating to free movement of persons and migration to foster integration and development in the region.

136. This high level meeting was attended by Ministers in charge of Migration Matters, Security, Interior and Regional Integration. Member States were duly represented in this meeting by their Sectoral Ministers or Representatives.

137. After further deliberations, the Honourable Ministers made recommendations for the consideration of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.

138. Council endorsed the report and recommended it for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 21: Presentation and Consideration of report of 11th ECOWAS Ministers of Trade (ECOMOT) meeting and the report of the 3rd (Tripartite) Ministerial Committee on ECOWAS Common Schedule of Tariff Concessions for the AfCFTA

a) Report of the 11th ECOWAS Ministers of Trade Meeting

139. The Honourable Minister of Trade and Industry of the, Mr. Alan Kyerematen, Chair of the Meeting, represented by Mr. Tei Konzi, ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, presented the outcome of the 11th Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Trade (ECOMOT), which was held virtually on 22 October 2020, as well as the outcome of the 3rd meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Tariff Concessions was held on 18 November 2020.

140. At the 11th Meeting of ECOMOT, the Ministers reviewed the report of the Trade Experts and after extensive deliberations, endorsed the recommendations contained in the report related to African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations,

Renegotiations of ECOWAS Member States' Tariff Concessions at the WTO, ECOWAS Trade Information System (ECOTIS), West Africa Trade and Competitiveness Observatory, ECOWAS Common Trade Policy (CTP), ECOWAS Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) Policy and Strategy, ECOWAS COVID-19 Trade Response, and the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA).

141. After further deliberations, the Honourable Ministers made the following recommendations for the consideration of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers:

- Submit for approval the results of the consultations of the Ministerial Committee on the ECOWAS Common Schedule of Tariff Concessions for the AfCFTA, which was established by the 83rd Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.
- Recommend for approval by ECOWAS Council of Ministers the consolidated draft ECOWAS Common Schedule of Specific Commitments on Trade in Services in the five (5) priority areas under the AfCFTA.
- Recommend for approval by ECOWAS Council of Ministers, the recommendations of the Competition Consultative Committee (CCC) of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA), which was held on 24th August 2020, with a view to its rapid operationalization.

b) Submission of the ECOWAS Common Offers for the AfCFTA to the AUC

142. In line with the recommendation of the 11th ECOMOT, the 3rd meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Tariff Concessions was held on 18 November 2020 to finalize consultations. The meeting, which was attended by Ghana, Nigeria, and Niger, with the ECOWAS Commission as the Secretariat, successfully resolved outstanding issues and recommended the draft offer for submission to the Chair of the Council of Ministers for consideration and endorsement.

143. In view of the Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly on the AfCFTA on 5th December 2020, the ECOWAS Commission sought and received the approval from the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Minister for the submission of the draft ECOWAS Common Schedules of Tariff Concession and Specific Commitments on Trade in Services for the AfCFTA to the Africa Union Commission, pending the session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers in January 2021. The ECOWAS common schedules were made on December 3, 2020.

144. Council endorsed the report and recommended it for adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 22: Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of ECOWAS Vision 2050

145. The Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission presented a memorandum on the status of development of the ECOWAS Vision 2050. She noted that the Council of Ministers endorsed a 5-Phase Roadmap for the development of the Vision in December 2018. Thereafter she explained that Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Roadmap that will deliver the first draft of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 blueprint have been technically completed and Phases 4 and 5 that are dedicated to the review, validation, finalisation and adoption of the Vision will be completed by March 2021. She attributed the slight delay experienced in the development and finalisation of the Vision to the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease.

146. The Vice President also highlighted that the implementation of the Roadmap has followed a consultative and participatory approach. Specifically she noted that the Commission and other Community Institutions under the technical guidance of an Ad-Hoc Committee of Directors have worked collaboratively with relevant stakeholders in the 15 Member States, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and GIZ to ensure that international best practices are followed in the development of the Vision and necessary actions are taken to popularise the Vision.

147. Finally she assured Council that Management is taking all necessary measures to ensure that ECOWAS Vision 2050 blueprint is finalised over the next few months in readiness for Council's endorsement and adoption of the Authority of Head of States and Government during the 2021 mid-year statutory meetings.

148. Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 23: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' Applications for International and Regional Statutory positions

149. In order to harmonize and give more chances to ECOWAS Member States' applications for vacant positions in regional and international organisations, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at their 49th Ordinary Summit on 4 June 2016 in Dakar requested Member States applying for these positions to

submit their candidatures to the Chair of the Council of Ministers for arbitration in order to come up with single candidatures for different positions, which should be fully supported by the Community.

150. Since early 2020, 63 requests (33 vacancies) for support were received by the Commission and circulated to All Member States. Out of these 33 vacancies, 11 positions¹ are still available as yet to be filled as of 31st December 2020.

151. The positions related to (i) the Chairperson of the African Union for the 2022 – 2023 period (1 seat for 3 candidates: Ghana, Togo, Senegal); (ii) the Commissioners of the African Union Commission for the 2021-2025 period (2 seats for 5 candidates: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone); (iii) the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (1 seat for 2 candidates: Ghana, Gambia); and (iv) the Secretary General of the Conference of Ministers for Youth and Sports of the Francophonie–CONFEJES- (1 seat for 2 candidates: Burkina Faso, Mali) received several applications from ECOWAS Member States and require an arbitration.

152. To facilitate its work, Council requested Member States (i) to systematically notify the ECOWAS Commission their applications to international, continental and regional statutory positions, as well as their requests for the Community support; and (ii) to provide accurate and complete information regarding the positions (i.e. CV in the 3 ECOWAS official languages, election dates, etc.).

153. Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 24: Presentation of Report on the status Forensic Audit of ECOWAS Institutions

154. The Forensic Audit of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies was decided upon by the 51st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Monrovia on 4 June 2017. Pursuant to this decision, the terms of reference were approved by the Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers held in Lomé on 7 and 8 July 2018.

155. Ernst & Young, United Kingdom, selected to carry out the audit, started its work in March 2019 and presented its report to the Council of Ministers on 26 June 2019. The report highlighted numerous shortcomings, particularly in the internal control system, over the period of the audit. The report also uncovered financial irregularities that were duly investigated.

¹ Or 9 positions in case the Region got the AUC Deputy Chairperson seat

156. It should be noted that steps have been taken for the past two years to align ECOWAS management with international standards, notably through the establishment of an efficient and transparent management system.

157. The Authority of Heads of State and Government, at its meeting held on 21 December 2019, upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, adopted the decisions aimed at strengthening internal control, governance, and transparency in the management of ECOWAS.

158. The status of implementation of the decisions is as follows:

- Action plan to implement the recommendations of the study: The action plan has been finalised and is being implemented by ECOWAS Community Institutions and Agencies.
- Level of responsibility of staff and sanctions: The study on the alleged fraud relating to the purchase of IT equipment at GIABA was finalised by Ernst & Young in February 2020. Disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against the staff members involved, with the establishment of a Joint Disciplinary Advisory Board (comprising representatives of all ECOWAS Institutions). The Joint Disciplinary Advisory Board met from 9 to 12 November 2020 and submitted its report to the President of the Commission who decided to follow its recommendations.
- Recruitment for the Department of Finance and the Office of the Auditor-General is in progress.
- Electronic and physical archiving system to store administrative and accounting documents is also in progress.

159. All ECOWAS Community Institutions and Agencies are involved in the process of implementation of the cashless policy and strengthening the management control and governance of institutions. Measures are regularly taken to ensure that the procedures are followed in accordance with the extant regulations.

160. Council took note of the report.

Item 25: Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of the Single Currency Programme and ECOWAS the Payment and Settlements System

a) Single Currency Programme

161. The ECOWAS Monetary Cooperation Programme (EMCP) was adopted on July 9, 1987 with a view to operationalizing the idea of creating a Monetary Union within ECOWAS. In this context, a roadmap for the EMCP, was adopted in Abuja, Nigeria, on May 25, 2009, which was subsequently revised in Accra, Ghana, on February 21, 2018.

162. Notwithstanding the mixed results in terms of macroeconomic convergence and the harmonization of policies and programs, significant progress has been made toward the actualization of the EMCP, namely:

- i. Adoption of a flexible exchange rate regime and a monetary policy framework focused on inflation targeting;
- ii. Adoption of the federal system for the ECOWAS Central Bank;
- iii. The choice of ECO as the name of the future ECOWAS Single Currency and its symbol;
- iv. The choice of the name "Central Bank of West Africa (CBWA)" as the name of the ECOWAS Central Bank;
- v. Establishment of a Special Fund endowed with \$6 million to finance the implementation of activities included in the revised Roadmap.

163. The regular assessment of the state of macroeconomic convergence of Member States based on the Macroeconomic Convergence and Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States, showed that at the end of 2019, only Togo had met all the primary criteria on a sustainable basis. Consequently, ECOWAS was unable to enter in the stability and consolidation phase as of 1st January, 2020.

164. Furthermore, since Covid-19 has been considered an exceptional circumstance under article 19 of the Pact (Additional Act A / SA.4 / 06/12), the 57th Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Niamey on 7th September 2020, decided to exempt the Members State from compliance with the convergence criteria during 2020.

165. In accordance with the decision of the 57th Conference of Heads of State and Government, the drafts of the new Pact and of the new Roadmap were examined by the Technical Committee, the conclusions of which were submitted to the Ministerial Committee on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme at its meeting on 14th July 2021.

166. At the end of its deliberations, the Ministerial Committee took the following decisions:

- a) Propose to Heads of State the date of 1st January 2022 for the start of the convergence phase;
- b) Organize a meeting of the Technical Committee and propose a new roadmap for the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.
- c) Perform additional work to better define the concept of majority with a view to submitting the Roadmap and Convergence Pact drafts to the Authority of Heads of State and Government for final decision at their ordinary session in June 2021.

- d) Submit those conclusions to the Summit of 23th January 2021 as a status of implementation of their decision.

b.) ECOWAS Payments and Settlement System

167. The Commission, in collaboration with the West Africa Monetary Agency (WAMA) is implementing the ECOWAS Payments and Settlement System in line with the provisions of Article 51(b-e) of the Revised Treaty. The project seeks to entrench a payment area within the region, through the establishment of a mechanism for multilateral payments and settlement for trade and investment among Member States.

168. To this end, a feasibility study has been concluded, and a semi-centralized payments system model adopted the Committee of Governors of Central Banks, to facilitate interoperability and multilateral settlement among Member States' National Payments System. The model which will comprise a regional real time gross settlement system, regional automated clearing house and a regional switch, will support payments for intra-regional trade in domestic currencies of Member States. This will eliminate delays in cross-border payments and conserve foreign reserve for the region, among other objectives. The model shall support all types of payments.

169. Efforts to harmonise the legal and regulatory regimes for payments and settlement in Member States are at advanced stages.. This will create an enabling environment for operation of the cross-border payments system and the launch of the ECOWAS Payment Area. On adoption of the proposed harmonized payments regulations by Member States, one among the Central Banks in the region will be selected to host the regional payments system's RTGS, which would be complemented by the other components, also to be hosted by selected existing automated clearing houses and switches in Member States. A supervision mechanism is proposed for cross-border payments transaction, pending the establishment of the Regional Central Bank.

170. Following presentation, Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 26: Presentation of Memorandum on the Status of Implementation the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);

171. The Commissioner for Trade presented a summary of the report on the status of implementation the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in the ECOWAS region. On 1 January 2021, the start of trading under the AfCFTA effectively began

on the basis of schedule of tariff concessions (covering 90% of Tariff Lines), with agreed Rules of Origin.

172. To date, thirty-five (35) AU member states have ratified the AfCFTA agreement. All fifteen Member States of ECOWAS have signed the agreement establishing the AfCFTA. Twelve (12) ECOWAS Member States have ratified the agreement to become State Parties to the Agreement. It is important that all ECOWAS Member States ratify the Agreement in order to promote harmonious trade liberalization in the region and to safeguard the integrity of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff.

173. Following a long process of negotiations and concessions, the common schedules of tariff concessions for trade in goods and specific commitments for trade in Services in the five priority sectors was submitted to the African Union at the beginning of December 2020 following the approval by the Chair of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

174. In order to take better advantage of the AfCFTA, eight (8) ECOWAS Member States have developed their national implementation strategy, whilst four (4) others have initiated the development process. At the regional level, the ECOWAS Commission is developing a regional AfCFTA Implementation Strategy in order to ensure a coordinated, integrated and coherent approach to the AfCFTA implementation in the region.

175. Furthermore, to ensure better involvement of all stakeholders (States, private sector, civil society), the Commission has been conducting awareness-raising campaigns in Member States. Although the AfCFTA negotiations are Member States-driven, the ECOWAS Commission continues, at the regional level, to coordinate the positions/approaches of our Member States in the various negotiations.

176. Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 27: Any Other Business

177. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Togolese Abroad, Professor Robert Dussey brought to the attention of Council, the imminent end of tenure of the current Statutory Appointees of Community Institutions which is four years non-renewable in line with Article 18 of the Revised Treaty. He also cited the provisions of the Supplementary Act A/SP.14/02/12 on the modalities for the allocation of Statutory positions in Community Institutions. In this regard, he urged the President of the ECOWAS Commission in consultation with the Chairperson of Council to launch the process by the end of January 2021 in conformity with extant texts.

178. He also proposed that the notice of vacancies of statutory positions be included on the agenda of the next Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers in June 2021 for decision.

Item 28: Adoption of Report

179. The report was adopted after amendments.

Item 29: Closing Session

180. The Chairperson of Council, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, in her closing remarks, thanked Council Members for their active participation and constructive contributions during the session. Thereafter, she declared the Eighty-Fifth Ordinary Session of Council closed.

DONE VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, THIS 21ST DAY OF JANUARY 2021



**HON. SHIRLEY AYORKOR BOTCHWEY
CHAIRPERSON
FOR COUNCIL**



Original: English

Date: 21 January 2021

**EIGHTY-FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

Videoconference, 20 -21 January 2021

VOTE OF THANKS

The Members of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers Meeting via videoconference from 20 to 21 January 2021, express their profound gratitude to the ECOWAS Commission for the excellent videoconference facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the successful conduct of their session.

DONE VIRTUALLY, THIS 21ST DAY OF JANUARY 2021

THE COUNCIL