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NINETIETH (90TH) ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Bissau, 6th – 7th July 2023

FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS Commission
Bissau, July 2023

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninetieth (90th) Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers was held on 6th and 7th July 2023 in Bissau, Republic of Guinea-Bissau. The session, which was attended by Ministers in charge of Regional Integration and Finance, was chaired by Her Excellency Suzi Carla Barbosa, Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Guinea Bissau and Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.
2. The following Member States were represented:
 - Republic of Benin;
 - Republic of Cabo Verde;
 - Republic of Cote d'Ivoire;
 - Republic of The Gambia;
 - Republic of Ghana;
 - Republic of Guinea Bissau;
 - Republic of Liberia;
 - Republic of Niger;
 - Federal Republic of Nigeria;
 - Republic of Senegal;
 - Republic of Sierra Leone;
 - Togolese Republic.
3. Burkina Faso, the Republics of Guinea and Mali did not participate because of their suspension by the Authority of Heads of State and Government from participating in all ECOWAS activities until further notice.
4. The following Institutions and Specialised Agencies of ECOWAS were also represented:
 - ECOWAS Commission;
 - ECOWAS Parliament;
 - ECOWAS Community Court of Justice;
 - West African Health Organisation (WAHO);
 - Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA);
 - ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID);
 - Office of the Auditor General (OAG).
5. The Audit Committee of Council also participated in the meeting.
6. The list of participants is as **Annex I** to this Report.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

7. In his welcome address the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray expressed his sincere gratitude to H.E. General Umaro Sissoco Embaló, the President of Guinea Bissau, to the Government and the People of Guinea Bissau for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to the members of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, as well as for the excellent facilities put at their disposal to ensure successful deliberations.
8. He thanked the Chair of Council, H.E. Suzi Carla Barbosa for her leadership and expressed his appreciation to the Council members for their commitment and support that have been instrumental in the attainment of key milestones to the Community's regional integration agenda.
9. Dr. Touray further highlighted the salient points to be addressed by Council, such as, the 2023 Interim Report on the State of the Community, reports on the financial situation of our Community, the Audit Committee report, the report of the Administration and Finance Committee, as well as those on the various programmes of the Community. He encouraged Council to give due consideration to all the items on the agenda, as each topic plays a vital role in shaping the future of the Community and will undoubtedly impact the lives of the millions of people across West Africa.
10. On that note, he wished fruitful and constructive deliberations for the Council Session while expressing his profound appreciation to all the Member States, the staff of the institutions, and development partners for their unwavering support and commitment to the ECOWAS Vision.
11. In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of Council, H.E. Suzi Carla Barbosa, conveyed greetings from His Excellency General Umaro Sissoco Embaló, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau and Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government to Council and warmly welcomed members of Council to Amilcar Cabral's homeland.
12. The Chair of Council expressed appreciation for the tireless work of all ECOWAS institutions towards regional integration, economic and social progress and the collective welfare of the Community.
13. She drew attention on the need for strategic alignment of community policies resulting from a shared critical and prospective vision of the development process of Member States and national policies of intervention in priority areas of economic development and modernization of infrastructure and services for the benefit of community integration agenda.
14. She recalled the importance of Member States combining synergies and dynamic partnerships to mobilize more financial and technical resources for the implementation of

community development programmes and projects in a context of energy, financial, food security and other crises, exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war. In this regard, she stressed the importance of effective implementation of the Community Levy Protocol by Member States.

15. She noted that the political and diplomatic instruments and mechanisms needed to safeguard peace and security in the sub-region were a sine qua non condition for promoting the development of member states to achieve the Vision 2050 precepts.

16. She thereafter declared the 90th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers duly opened.

17. The full texts of the speeches are attached as **Annex II** to this Report.

II. ELECTION OF BUREAU

18. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairperson - Republic of Guinea Bissau;
- Rapporteurs - Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- Republic of Senegal.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

19. The following agenda was adopted:

I. OPENING CEREMONY

- Welcome Statement by President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray**;
- Opening Remarks by Chairperson of Council, **H.E. Suzi Carla Barbosa**, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities of the Republic of Guinea Bissau
- Group Photograph;

II. END OF OPENING CEREMONY

- Housekeeping Information;

III. CLOSED DOOR SESSION

- Meeting called to order by Chair of Council
- Election of Bureau;
- Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme;

ITEMS FOR DECISION

- i. Presentation and consideration of the President's 2023 Interim Report on the State of the Community.
- ii. Presentation and consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community as of 15th June 2023 and Interim Report on Programmes and Budget Execution
- iii. Presentation and consideration of the Final Report of the 33rd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee.
- iv. Presentation and consideration of the Auditor General's 2022 Annual Report.
- v. Presentation and consideration of Report of the 51st Meeting of the Audit Committee.
- vi. Presentation and consideration of the External Auditor's Report
- vii. Presentation and consideration of the Status of implementation of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the 89th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.
- viii. Presentation and consideration of a memorandum on the establishment of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) as a Technical Advisory Organ to the Council of Ministers.
- ix. Presentation and consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 63rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.
- x. Presentation of a memorandum of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme Task Force on the implementation of Intra-Community Trade Regulations by Member States.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

- x. Presentation of a memorandum on the Report of the Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Employment on:
 - a. adoption of the Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (2021-2030)
 - b. approval of Extension of Implementation Period of the ECOWAS Decent Work Regional programme (2022- 2026)
- xii. Presentation of a memorandum on the conclusion of the 3rd Joint Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade & Industry.
- xiii. Presentation of a memorandum on the Report of Meeting of the Ministers of Industry.
- xiv. Presentation of a memorandum on the 7th and 8th Meetings of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Finance and Budget on the consolidation of the ECOWAS Customs Union and Fiscal Harmonization.

- xv. Presentation of a memorandum for the adoption of Regulation on Classification of Tourism Accommodation Establishment (TAE) in ECOWAS region.
- xvi. Presentation of a memorandum on the 2nd Joint Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Mines and Hydrocarbons.
- xvii. Presentation of a memorandum on the conclusions of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Energy.
- xviii. Presentation of a memorandum on the conclusions of the Meeting of Ministers in charge of Road Maintenance on the Regional Strategy for Road Maintenance Financing in the ECOWAS Region.
- xix. Presentation of a memorandum on the results of the 2020 Jury session of the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI).
- xx. Presentation of a memorandum on the 'Lomé Declaration on Fertilizer and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel'.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- xxi. Presentation of a memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' Applications for International and Regional Statutory Positions.
- xxii. Presentation of a memorandum on the implementation status of the Regional Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy.
- xxiii. Presentation of a memorandum on the implementation status of the ECOWAS Fund for Regional Stabilisation and Development Fund.
- xxiv. Presentation of a memorandum on the Agro-Pastoral, Food, and Nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa.
- xxv. Presentation of the memorandum on the Single Currency Programme.
- xxvi. Presentation of a memorandum on the status of implementation and enforcement of Judgments and Orders of the ECOWAS Court of Justice by Member States and Institutions.
- xxvii. Any Other Business;
- xxviii. Adoption of report;
- xxix. Vote of Thanks;
- xxx. Closing Remarks.

IV. OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Item 1: Presentation and Consideration of the President's 2023 Interim Report on the State of the Community

20. In his presentation, the President of the ECOWAS Commission highlighted the main activities implemented and achievements of Community Institutions during the first part of the 2023.



21. The Report also provided an overview of the global and the regional economic challenges of 2022 and the first half of 2023. At the global level, the challenges include, but not limited to, the persistence of inflationary pressures, the tightening of the monetary policies and financial conditions by the Central Banks, and other related shocks in the financial sector, caused by factors such as the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukrainian conflict. At the ECOWAS regional level, high depreciation of national currencies, insecurity, supply chain disruptions were the main impediments reported.
22. Nonetheless, some modest growth was recorded. The global economy grew by 2.8 percent in 2022, compared to 6.0 percent in 2021. The growth in the ECOWAS Region also slowed to 3.9 percent in 2022, compared to 4.4 percent in the previous year.
23. Regarding the implementation of the community work programs, the President presented the main achievements of the ECOWAS Commission and the Institutions in the first half of 2023.
24. On the Promotion of Regional Peace, Security and Good Governance, the President informed Council of the Commission's continued support to the transition processes in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali, with the aim of finding lasting solutions to the crises and restoring Constitutional order. He stated that all the three Member States have made some progress with the implementation of their transition programmes.
25. On deepening Economic Integration, Council was informed that the ECOWAS Commission continues to support Member States in the negotiation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and has developed a Regional Implementation Strategy for AfCFTA, as well as a Regional E-commerce Strategy covering the period 2023-2027. ECOWAS continues to support Member States in negotiations in other fora.
26. On the promotion of Private Sector and Industrial Development, the Commission has carried out cross-border investigations and market studies, as well as validated a set of 38 ECOWAS Standards (ECOSTANDS) covering various sectors to promote the manufacture of made in ECOWAS goods. The Commission has made significant progress in the establishment of the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card (ENBIC) and the introduction of ECOVISA. Progress was also made in the implementation of the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme and harmonization of statistics.
27. On promoting inclusive and sustainable development, Council was informed that the Commission provided aid for voluntary returns of migrants stranded in Niger, food for vulnerable children of Internally Displaced Persons, as well as adopted a Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour in West Africa (2021-2030). Concerning Education, the ECOWAS Nnamdi Azikiwe Academic Mobility Scheme (ENAAMS) provided immersion and research support to ninety (90) students.

28. On Resilience, Food, and Nutrition Security, it was noted that the reserve stock stood at 36,811 tonnes of cereals by the end of March 2023, and the Commission has responded to food and nutrition crises in 4 Member States. On Animal health, pastoralism, and animal production, the region vaccinated about 1.5 million small ruminants against pests. About 12,000 young people were also trained in the 15 ECOWAS Member States on agroecological practices for sustainable agriculture.

29. Concerning Infrastructure, Council was informed that the Commission has made progress in the implementation of its investment programme and the creation of the Regional Power Market. Works on the construction of the WAPP Information and Coordination Centre has been completed, and 13 Member States are now interconnected to the regional electric backbone. During the period, the Commission also commenced the implementation of the Regional Electricity Access and Battery Energy Storage System project. The feasibility studies and preliminary designs for the construction project of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Highway was completed. Draft reports on the detailed designs and financing strategy to mobilise investment project finance has been received and revision is underway. Route alignment definition studies on the Dakar-Abidjan Corridor highway has also commenced.

30. On building capable institutions, Council was informed that the Commission has commenced the recruitment process with the conduct of interviews for certain positions and the advertisement of vacant positions. Also, the ad hoc committee set up in August 2022 to review the complaints from different categories of staff had commenced work. Regarding to strengthening the Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation System, the Commission has commenced the alignment of the 4X4 strategic objectives with ECOWAS Vision 2050.

31. The President also presented the programme implementation of the ECOWAS Institutions, namely the ECOWAS Parliament, Community Court of Justice, GIABA, WAHO and EBID.

32. The ECOWAS Parliament has held an ordinary session as well as several committee meetings, to review draft texts to be submitted to the Council of Ministers and seminar on actualizing the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme.

33. As of March 2023, a total of 641 cases had been filled at the court since 2003 of which 347 judgments and 135 rulings have been delivered. The Court has also issued 52 orders while 174 cases are pending. Council was informed that the Community Courts of Justice has invested in Information Communication Technology (ICT) geared towards ensuring optimal management of the workflow.

34. On the fight against money laundering, GIABA provided technical and financial support to member States to combat money laundering, the financing of terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Council was informed that on-site mutual evaluations of some Member States have also been executed.

35. On health, the President noted that the period was characterized by a relative lull in COVID-19. However maternal and infant mortality remains high (347 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), as well as the prevalence of malaria (between 18 and 375 per 1,000 inhabitants) in the region.
36. Regarding EBID, Council was informed that institutional reform had been adopted to align the Bank with international best practices. The Bank evaluated three (3) projects, which amounted to US\$66.26 million as of March 31, 2023. The Bank's new disbursements increased by 172% compared to the same period in 2022, which amounted to US\$128 million, of which 65% was in favour of the public sector. Nine (9) Member States have fully paid up their called capital.
37. Council congratulated the President of the Commission for the quality of the report presented. In particular, Council recognised the important role of ECOWAS Observers deployed by the Commission in Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, in furtherance of good governance and democracy.
38. Council supported the recommendation of the Commission to engage Algeria on the treatment and respect for human rights of deported West African citizens.
39. Taking into account the current economic situation in region, Council directed the Commission to institute a peer review mechanism to share best practice on dealing with economic shocks and taking advantage of market opportunities such as the AfCFTA.
40. Council commended the Commission on ongoing interventions on regional corridors and called for greater attention towards linking coastal and landlocked Member States.
41. To improve intra-regional trade, Council urged Member States to address the issues of illegal trafficking of goods and address non-tariff barriers which impede cross border trade. Furthermore, Council highlighted the negative impact of illicit trade in timber on the security situation at The Gambia – Senegal border and called for increased vigilance to strengthen security at this border.
42. On the issue of paid-up capital of EBID, Council called upon Member States with outstanding payments to urgently honour their obligations.
43. Council directed the Commission to prepare a mechanism to expedite the signature of Text (Acts, Directives, Regulations) adopted by Community Instances.
44. Council thereafter adopted the interim report.

Item 2: Presentation and consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community as of 15th June 2023 and Interim Report on Programmes and Budget Execution

45. The Commission presented the report on the financial situation of the Community as of 15th June 2023. The presentation recalled the total Community Budget of UA 418,072,103 as approved by the Council of Ministers, during its 89th Ordinary Session held in Abuja on 1st and 2nd December 2022.

46. The Meeting was also informed that revenue from the Community Levy remained the main source of ECOWAS financing representing 75% of the approved budget. On the expenditure side, the largest share (88%) continued to be budgetary allocations to Community Institutions.

47. The Commission also informed Council that as of 15th June 2023, a total amount of UA 125,497,085 had been mobilised, that is, a mobilisation rate of 30% composed of the following:

- (i) UA 41,091,289 as Community Levy, from all Member States representing a mobilisation rate of 23%.
- (ii) 100% utilization of Year-End Balances.
- (iii) UA 123,136 as Other Income, corresponding to a mobilization rate of 24%.
- (iv) UA 14,049,806 from external funds for the Commission, WAHO and GIABA, representing 13% of the anticipated income.

Table 1: Implementation of the Approved Budget

REVENUE			
Chapters	2023 Approved Budget	Actual Income (UA)	Actual Income (%)
Community Levy	181,431,403	41,091,289	22.6%
Year-End Bank Balances	70,232,854	70,232,854	100.0%
Arrears of Community Levy	61,332,944	0	0.0%
Other Income	523,186	123,136	23.5%
Income from External Sources	104,551,716	14,049,806	13.4%
Total Income	418,072,103	125,497,085	30.0%
EXPENDITURE			
Chapters	2023 Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure (UA)	Actual Exp. Rate (%)
Institutions	366,254,680	76,393,043	20.9%
Statutory Obligations	11,257,750	1,433,026	12.7%
Special Programmes & Interventions	18,720,190	1,078,511	5.8%
Peace & Security	21,839,483	3,650,003	16.7%
TOTAL	418,072,103	82,554,583	19.7%

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48. On the expenditure side, only 19.7% of the anticipated expenses were made, that is, UA 82,554,583 against UA 418,072,103, of which UA 76,393,043 was consumed by Institutions, UA 1,433,026 by Statutory Obligations, UA 1,078,511 by Special Programmes and Interventions, and UA 3,650,003 by Peace and Security.

49. After deliberations, Council directed the Commission to use the agreed template for financial reporting in future presentations.

50. Council directed Community Institutions to urgently address the perennial issues of low expenditure rate and revenue mobilisation.

51. Council called on Member States to comply with the provisions of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) in order to ensure improved regional trade.

52. Council called on concerned Member States to pay their Community Levy contribution in order to ensure the smooth functioning of Community institutions and implementation of Community programmes.

Item 3: Presentation and Consideration of the Final Report of the 33rd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

53. The final report of the 33rd Ordinary Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by the Head of the ECOWAS National Office in Guinea Bissau and Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee (AFC). The report covered the following:

- (i) Presentation and Consideration of Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the 32nd Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;
- (ii) Presentation and Consideration of Report on the Financial Situation of the Community as of 15th June 2023 and Interim Report on Programmes and Budget Execution;
- (iii) Presentation and Consideration of the Report on the Status of Implementation of Provisions of the Community Levy Protocol;
- (iv) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Implementation Status of the ECOWAS Fund for Regional Stabilization and Development;
- (v) Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum on the Request for Payment of a Lump Sum for the Shipment of Staff Effects and Movable Property;
- (vi) Presentation of a Memorandum on the activities of the ad hoc Committee on Staff complaints;
- (vii) Presentation of a Memorandum on the Status of Implementation of the Staff Skills Audit ;
- (viii) Presentation of a Memorandum on the Status of the Staff Recruitment Process;
- (ix) Presentation and Consideration of Memorandum on the Conversion of Contract Staff;
- (x) Presentation of the Auditor General's 2022 Annual Report.

54. Council directed on the Commission to accelerate recruitment of staff and take all necessary measures to address any bottlenecks in the process in order to improve the level of programme execution of the Community.

55. Concerning the issue of the conversion of Contract Staff, Council took note of the recommendations made by the AFC and directed the Commission to consider all outstanding issues on a case-by-case basis by the next Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.

56. Concerning the Human Resource Manual of Procedures, Council directed the Commission to finalise the Manual by the next Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers.

57. Considering the current economic situation, Council directed that the Memorandum on the Request for Payment of a Lump Sum for the Shipment of Staff Effects and Movable Property should be reconsidered by AFC and re-submitted to the next Ordinary Session of the Council Ministers.

58. Council recalled the authority of the President of the Commission to delegate his authority to a duly appointed representative. In this regard, the Council directed the Commission to propose a regulation to be submitted for consideration of the Chair of the Council.

59. Council adopted the other recommendations contained in the report.

Item 4: Presentation and Consideration of the Auditor General's 2022 Annual Report

60. The Auditor General presented his report to the Council of Ministers, which focused on, Overview of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), Risk Management and an update on the implementation of the OAG's work plans, and Budget and Staffing.

61. At the end of his presentation, the Council approved the Auditor General's report and all the recommendations therein as detailed below:

- i. The Commission to complete the Risk Assessment exercise for the Directorate of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology as well as the Department of Economic Affairs and Agriculture.
- ii. All Heads of Institution to adopt, at a minimum, annual risk assessment of their operations and activities to continually monitor and evaluate risks and update their Risk Matrices, Risk Registers, and Risk Maps.
- iii. All Heads of Institution to establish Risk Management Committees with cross-functional expertise as well as designate Risk Champions for their respective Institutions.
- iv. The Commission to prioritise the successful implementation and operationalisation of the Risk Management Module in the Governance, Risk, and

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- Compliance (GRC) platform of SAP/ ECOLink and upload all approved risk registers.
- v. All Heads of Institution to urgently recruit and fill all vacant positions in Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Conference and Protocol to sustain the transfer of control, ensure segregation of duties, and efficient service delivery.
 - vi. The President of ECOWAS Commission to urgently Recruit a consultant to support the development and deployment of the Authority Schedule, to be embedded into the ECOLINK platform, to facilitate Delegation of Powers for efficient operations and administration.
 - vii. The Commission to review the entire business process in ECOLink following the handing over of control to ensure non-combination of incompatible functions and roles.
 - viii. The President to set up and make functional, Committees provided for in the ECOWAS Financial Regulations namely:
 - a. Internal Oversight Committee (Article 153)
 - b. Liquidity and Investment Committee (Article 101)
 - c. Assets Management Committee (Article 134)
 - d. Community Financial Report Consolidation Committee (Article 147)
 - e. Projects and Grants Management Committee (Article 44.2)
 - ix. All Heads of Institution to develop a Roadmap detailing steps to move the overall ECOWAS control rating from Limited Assurance to at least, a Reasonable Assurance by the end of 2023.
 - x. All Heads of Institution to design a strategy to ensure compliance with Community Rules and Regulations.
 - xi. All Heads of Institution to ensure full and speedy implementation of all Audit Recommendations, especially those classified as Critical and High and report to Audit Committee at least once a year.

62. Furthermore, Council reiterated the importance of accelerating the recruitment process in order improve on the level of compliance.

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of Report of the 51st Meeting of the Audit Committee

63. The Chair of the Audit Committee made a presentation of its activities to Council. The Report covered the 50th and 51st sessions of the Committee. The Committee informed the Council of Ministers that the financial statements could not be presented to Council as the audit process had not been concluded and would be presented at its next session.

64. The Audit Committee, in line with Regulations advised the Council of Ministers to recommend to the Authority of Heads of State and Government to approve the appointment of

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Ernst & Young Chartered Accountants (Ghana) as the external auditors of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies for the 2022 and 2023 financial years.

65. The following recommendations were submitted by the Audit Committee for consideration and approval by the Council of Ministers.

- i. Approve all the recommendations in the 2022 Annual Report of the Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies and direct management to implement them.
- ii. Due to the dire nature of the staffing situation, ECOWAS Institutions should take immediate action to identify and fill all critical vacant positions as earlier directed by the Council of Ministers by 31st December 2023. It is recommended that Council give approval to all ECOWAS Institutions, if deemed necessary, to engage consultancy services to carry out the recruitment process within the stipulated time. This urgent action is needed to sustain the transfer of control, ensure segregation of duties, and efficient service delivery.
- iii. The ECOWAS Commission to justify the low mobilisation of donor funding by providing reasons and propose measures to increase donor funding to the next session of Council of Ministers.
- iv. ECOWAS budget should be made more realistic by taking into consideration historical trends.
- v. The ECOWAS Commission to assign deadlines to respective Managements of Institutions and Agencies to put measures in place to implement audit recommendations, so as to improve the control environment and move from the current status of Limited Assurance to at least Reasonable Assurance.
- vi. In subsequent meetings of the Audit Committee, Managements of the Institutions and Agencies should be invited to make presentations on the status of implementation of audit recommendations. In order to control costs, the Committee recommends that these presentations should be virtual.

66. At the end of her presentation, the Council commended the Audit Committee for the work done so far and approved the recommendations.

Item 6: Presentation and Consideration of the External Auditor's Report

67. The Auditor General informed the Council that the External Auditor's Report will be submitted at the next Ordinary session of the Council of Ministers.

Item 7: Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions by the 89th Ordinary Session of Council of Ministers

68. The Commission presented a status report on the implementation of the thirteen (13) tasks assigned to the ECOWAS Community Institutions by the Council of Ministers at its 88th and 89th Ordinary Sessions.

69. After presentation, Council took note of the report and urged the Commission to ensure completion of the outstanding tasks.

Item 8: Presentation and consideration of a memorandum on the establishment of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) as a Technical Advisory Organ to the Council of Ministers

70. The Commission presented the memorandum on the establishment of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC) as a Technical Advisory Organ to the Council of Ministers.

71. The Permanent Representatives have requested the integration of the PRC into the ECOWAS institutional framework, emphasizing its pivotal role in the Mediation and Security Council, as well as the expanded duties of Permanent Representatives as Ambassadors. The process leading to this draft decision involved a thorough review of the modalities, the adoption of Terms of Reference and Roadmap, and discussions during the PRC retreat.

72. After presentation, Council endorsed the memorandum and all recommendations contained therein. The Council directed that the Commission should ensure that the establishment and operations of the PRC should not have any financial implication to Commission and their functioning should not conflict with mandate and role of the AFC.

Item 9: Presentation and consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 63rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

73. The President of the Commission presented the draft agenda of the 63rd Ordinary Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

74. After presentation and amendments, Council adopted the Agenda which is attached as **Annex III** to this Report.

Item 10: Presentation of a memorandum of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme Task Force on the implementation of Intra-community Trade Regulations by Member States

75. The Commission presented the memorandum of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) Task Force and gave an update on the activities undertaken during the first half of 2023 as part of the elimination of obstacles to intra-Community trade. The presentation placed particular emphasis on the preparations underway for the high-level meeting of Member States of the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor. Due to the very busy political timetable during this six-month period, the meeting was scheduled for October 2023.

76. Council took note of the presentation and made the following recommendations:

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- i. Accelerate the automation of the ECOWAS Trade Liberation Scheme (ETLS)
- ii. Establish a dispute settlement mechanism to address issues between Member States
- iii. Strengthen the capacity of the Division in charge of ETLS at the Commission considering the number applications received
- iv. Harmonise trade instruments with UEMOA
- v. Schedule the proposed High-Level Meeting for the 5 Members States on the Abidjan – Lagos Corridor within the Q3 2023
- vi. Simplify the revised ECOWAS Common External Tariff guidelines

77. Council encouraged the Chairman of the ETLS Task Force to continue his advocacy campaign for the full implementation of the ETLS regulations.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

Item 11: Presentation and the Consideration of the Memorandum on the Report of the Ministers of Labour and Employment

78. The ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Labour and Employment met in a virtual meeting on the 3rd of March 2023 and adopted the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (RAP), 2021 – 2030, and approved the ECOWAS Commission's request to extend the implementation period of the ECOWAS Decent Work Regional Programme (EDWRP) from 2022 to 2026.

79. The ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and Force Labour aims at addressing the challenges of children engaging in economic activities to the detriment of their physical and mental well-being. The RAP focuses on five priority areas, namely: Legislation and Operationalization of Child Labour and Forced Labour Laws, Strengthening Systems for the elimination of Child Labour, Advocacy and Community Mobilization, Response to Child Labour in the Priority Sectors such as Conflicts, Emergencies and Humanitarian Situations, and Regional Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour.

80. Council was informed that the ECOWAS Decent Work Regional Programme (EDWRP) was developed in consultation with government, workers, and employers to promote opportunities for productive work in which rights are protected, adequate income is generated, and sufficient social protection is provided. In this respect, the EDWRP has three strategic pillars to facilitate policy discussions and actions with Member States, namely Promoting Employment Opportunities, Extending Social Protection Coverage and Implementing International Labour Standards.

81. Following the presentation, Council endorsed the Memorandum of the Report of the Meeting of the Ministers in charge of Labour and Employment that adopted the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on The Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (RAP), 2021 – 2030 and approved the extension of the ECOWAS Decent Work Regional Programme (DWRP) from 2022 to 2026.

Item 12: Presentation of a Memorandum on the conclusion of the 3rd Joint Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Trade & Industry

82. The Minister for Trade of the Republic of Guinea Bissau presented the conclusions of the 3rd Joint Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Trade and Industry which was held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire from the 27th to the 28th of April 2023. The overall objective of the meeting was to consider and validate key regional instruments, as well as discuss continental and multilateral trade issues. Specifically, the Meeting was to consider for adoption and recommend for approval to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, the following regional trade related instruments:

- (i) ECOWAS Implementation Strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (2023 -2027);
- (ii) ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy and Implementation Plan (2023 -2027); and
- (iii) ECOWAS Directive on Consumer Protection.

83. Concerning the ECOWAS Implementation Strategy for the AfCFTA (2023 – 2027), the Meeting commended the ECOWAS Commission for the quality of the Strategy, which seeks to ensure the effective integration of West African economies into the continental market. The strategy has the following five (5) Strategic objectives:

- (i) Improve the effectiveness of various components of the regional integration framework
- (ii) Harmonize and coordinate Member States' national AfCFTA implementation strategies
- (iii) Strengthen productive and trade capacities of the region
- (iv) Engage in strategic African trade policy
- (v) Make the AfCFTA an opportunity for women's economic empowerment and youth

84. Concerning the ECOWAS E-Commerce Strategy, the Meeting commended the ECOWAS Commission for the quality of the regional E-Commerce Strategy, which seeks to promote a sustainable, inclusive and secured e-commerce ecosystem, supportive of ECOWAS' efforts to use technology to accelerate structural change and foster regional integration through economic diversification and job creation. The strategy has the following five (4) Strategic objectives:

- (i) Strengthen ministries of trade to support domestic and cross-border e-commerce development;
- (ii) Secure trust along the e-commerce supply chain from producers to consumers;
- (iii) Access to e-commerce statistics and market information in ECOWAS; and
- (iv) Foster inclusion for e-commerce development in ECOWAS.

85. Concerning the Directive on Consumer Protection, the Meeting commended the ECOWAS Commission for the development of the Directive, which seeks to put in place a regional framework for the protection of consumers and promotion of consumers' rights and interests within the ECOWAS region to complement the efforts of Member States with regard to the cross-border dimension of certain consumer protection issues.

86. After presentation, Council endorsed the memorandum and adopted the Regulation on the ECOWAS Implementation Strategy for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (2023 -2027); as well as Regulation on the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy and Implementation Plan (2023 -2027).

87. Concerning the ECOWAS Directive on Consumer Protection, Council endorsed the Directive and recommended it for adoption by Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Item 13: Presentation of a memorandum on the Report of Meetings of the Ministers of Industry

88. The Ministers in charge of Trade and Industry held a meeting on 10th – 11th November 2022 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire to consider, in particular the study report on the Automotive Industry and the ECOWAS Automotive Policy Framework.

89. The development of the ECOWAS Automotive Policy Framework is premised on the outcome of the ECOWAS Commission initiative to investigate the Automotive Industry Development in West Africa, which was conducted with the support of Afreximbank and the African Association of Automotive Manufacturers (AAAM). Recalling that the study highlighted the opportunities existing in the ECOWAS region and considering that countries with dynamic and growing automotive sectors have been able to transform their highly mineral- and agricultural-dependent economies into a diversified economy with revenues derived from manufacturing and industrial development in general, the Ministers adopted the ECOWAS Automotive Policy Framework and recommended it for adoption by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

90. The meeting of the Ministers of Industry held on 30 March 2023 in Banjul, The Gambia, aimed to consider thirty-eight (38) standards and one (01) technical regulation on lead in paint. These standards which have been developed and harmonised in accordance with the ECOWAS Standards Harmonization Model (ECOSHAM) procedures, include five (05) standards on agricultural products, fourteen (14) standards on food products, five (05) standards on chemical products, ten (10) standards on information and communication technologies and four (04) standards on electrotechnical products. After presentation and discussions, the Ministers validated the 38 draft standards (ECOSTANDS) and the draft technical regulations and recommended them for adoption by the Council of Ministers.

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91. After presentation, Council endorsed the memorandum and adopted Directive on the ECOWAS Automotive Policy Framework, and thirty-eight (38) Standards and technical Regulations.

Item 14: Presentation of a memorandum on the 7th and 8th Meetings of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Finance and Budget on the consolidation of the ECOWAS Customs Union and Fiscal Harmonization

92. The Minister of Finance of Guinea Bissau briefed Council on the regulatory texts validated by the Ministers in charge of Finance and Budget at their meetings held on 26 November 2022 and 9 May 2023, respectively. These regulations are intended to consolidate the legal architecture of the ECOWAS customs union and tax harmonisation. They include:

- (i) Draft Supplementary Act on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters among ECOWAS Member States;
- (ii) Draft Regulation amending the list of categories of goods contained in the ECOWAS CET and statistical nomenclature;
- (iii) Draft Regulation on the list of exceptions to the Community rules of origin change in tariff heading;
- (iv) Draft Regulation establishing an institutional monitoring and evaluation system for the tax transition in West Africa;
- (v) Draft Directive relating to the harmonisation of ECOWAS Member States' laws on value added tax;
- (vi) Draft Directive on the harmonisation of the methodology for the evaluation of tax expenditure in ECOWAS Member States;
- (vii) Draft Directive setting out guidelines on the code of ethics and conduct for tax administrations in ECOWAS Member States;
- (viii) Draft Directive harmonising the excise duty laws in ECOWAS Member States;
- (ix) Draft Directive on the harmonisation of transfer pricing rules in ECOWAS Member States; and
- (x) Draft Directive on the harmonisation of rules on beneficial ownership in ECOWAS Member States.

93. Following consideration of the memorandum from the Ministers in charge of Finance and Budget, Council adopted the draft Regulations and Directives as submitted and recommended the draft Supplementary Act to the Authority of Heads of State and Government for adoption.

Item 15: Presentation of a memorandum for the adoption of Regulation on Classification of Tourism Accommodation Establishment (TAE) in ECOWAS region

94. The meeting of the Minister responsible for Tourism was held on April 7, 2023, in Lomé, Togolese Republic, with the aim of considering and adopting the final report of the experts'



meeting held earlier in the month. The report highlighted the need to strengthen the regulatory framework governing tourist accommodation establishments and reviewed the existing regulatory texts issued in 1999.

95. The objective of the new regulatory texts is to enhance the quality and competitiveness of ECOWAS destinations while respecting local cultural values and identities, boosting the local economy, and protecting cultural and natural heritage.

96. The Ministers acknowledged the efforts made to support tourism businesses and preserve jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic and recognized the importance of harmonizing types of tourist accommodation establishments within the ECOWAS region and commended the quality of the regulatory texts and classification grids.

97. After presentation, Council endorsed the memorandum and approved the Regulation on Classification of Tourism Accommodation Establishment (TAE) in ECOWAS region.

Item 16: Presentation of a memorandum on the 2nd Joint Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Mines and Hydrocarbons.

98. In the presentation, the Commission noted that during the 2nd Joint Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Mines and Hydrocarbons held on 25 November 2022 in Dakar, Senegal, the Ministers reviewed and approved four Community texts, namely: (i) the ECOWAS Regional Petroleum Code; (ii) the ECOWAS Model Regulation on Artisanal and Small-scale Mining, together with its implementation strategy; (iii) the ECOWAS Charter on Gender Mainstreaming in the Geo-Extractive Sector; and (iv) the regional study report on the ECOWAS strategic minerals feedstocks and inputs development strategy.

99. The ECOWAS Regional Petroleum Code provides a harmonised framework to promote the development and exploitation of hydrocarbon resources. The ECOWAS Model Regulation on Artisanal and Small-scale Mining provides a harmonised regional framework to promote and encourage artisanal and small-scale mining in Member States. The ECOWAS Charter on Gender Mainstreaming in the Geo-Extractive Sector provides a harmonised framework and will facilitate the formulation of specific national, institutional and legislative frameworks, as well as related measures, to take into account the gender dimension in the sector. The regional study report on the ECOWAS strategic minerals feedstocks and inputs development strategy provides for a coordinated regional approach to the development and valorisation of key strategic raw materials and mineral inputs in the context of an integrated value chain, optimisation and creation of economies of scale to contribute to the industrialisation of the Community.

100. The Commission also noted that the Ministers were briefed on the low level of implementation of Directive C/DIR.1/9/2020 on harmonised specifications for automotive fuels (gasoline and diesel) in the ECOWAS region, which was due to come into force on 1 January 2021 for all imports from outside the region, and on 1 January 2025 for production from local refineries in the region.



101. The Council of Ministers took note of the report and adopted the four Community texts and related Acts, namely (i) Supplementary Act on ECOWAS Regional Petroleum Code, (ii) Regulation on Gender Mainstreaming in the geo-extractive sector, and (iii) Regulation on Artisanal and Small-scale mining). Council also recommended the community text and supplementary Act on ECOWAS Regional Petroleum Code to the Authority of Heads of State and Government for adoption.

102. With regard to Directive C/DIR.1/9/2020 on harmonised specifications for automotive fuels in the ECOWAS region, Council directed the Commission to take the necessary measures to assist Member States, particularly in terms of capacity building and funding for timely implementation.

Item 17: Presentation of a memorandum on the conclusions of the Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of Energy

103. In his presentation, the Minister of Energy and Industry of Guinea Bissau, Chair of the meeting of Ministers in charge of Energy held on 24 March 2023 in Bissau, Guinea Bissau, stated that the Ministers had adopted the following three Community texts: (i) the updated ECOWAS Energy Policy; (ii) the ECOWAS Electricity Code; and (iii) the ECOWAS Green Hydrogen Policy and Strategy Framework.

104. The updated ECOWAS Energy Policy's vision by 2050 is "A Community with access to modern, affordable, reliable and sustainable energy services for improved living standards and socio-economic development". It is ambitious and transformative and is based on six (6) strategic objectives and an action plan in line with the vision, guiding principles and conclusions of the sector diagnosis. The ECOWAS Electricity Code establishes common and specific general principles for the electricity sub-sector in the ECOWAS region and contributes to the harmonisation of the legal, institutional and regulatory framework. The ECOWAS Green Hydrogen Policy and Strategy Framework is developed with the strategic vision of positioning the region as one of the most competitive producers and suppliers of green hydrogen and its derivatives, while addressing the socio-economic growth and sustainable development of all Member States.

105. The Minister also disclosed that the Ministers in charge of Energy officially launched the ECOWAS Energy Information System (ECOWAS-EIS), which provides data and information for better planning, design and monitoring of energy sector strategies and policies.

106. The Council of Ministers endorsed the memorandum and adopted the following three Community texts and related Acts: (i) Supplementary Act on the updated ECOWAS Energy Policy; (ii) Supplementary Act on the ECOWAS Electricity Code; and (iii) Regulation on the ECOWAS Green Hydrogen Policy and Strategy Framework. Council also recommended the Supplementary Act relating to Regional Petroleum Code to Authority of Heads of States for adoption.

Item 18: Presentation of a memorandum on the conclusions of the Meeting of Ministers in charge of Road Maintenance on the Regional Strategy for Road Maintenance Financing in the ECOWAS Region

107. The ECOWAS Road Sector Ministers met on 28th April 2022, in Niamey, Republic of Niger to review recommendations of a preceding Member States Technical Experts meeting on the Draft Regional Directive relating to the Regional Strategy for the Road Maintenance financing in the ECOWAS Region. The Regional Directive provides a uniform guide to ECOWAS Member States, based on well-proven international and regional experiences, for proper and timely planning, programming, and financing of road maintenance activities in the region. The preparation of the Strategy underwent extensive consultations at all levels with Member States and Regional Actors including Ministries of Roads and Transport, National Road Authorities, Road Maintenance Funds, Cross-Border Transport Unions, UN Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA) and the UEMOA Commission.

108. The Road Ministers noted that 40% of the roads in the Region are in bad condition and must be improved to support economic development. They therefore called for a high-level commitment for road maintenance to be prioritized in all Member States considering the huge investments made in road construction. They further urged gender considerations to be ensured throughout the value chain of road maintenance. The Road Sector Ministers then unanimously adopted the Draft ECOWAS Directive on the Regional Strategy on Financing Road Maintenance and recommended same to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for endorsement.

109. Following the presentation, the Council of Ministers endorsed the Memorandum of the Report of the Meeting of the Ministers in charge of Roads and recommended to the Authority of Heads of State and Government the adoption of the Directive relating to the Regional Strategy on Road Maintenance Financing in the ECOWAS Region and its Annexes (Action Plan and Monitoring & Evaluation Framework).

Item 19: Presentation of a memorandum on the results of the 2020 Jury session of the Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI)

110. The ECOWAS Research and Innovation Support Programme (PARI) is a competitive programme that aims to select the best projects submitted by researchers gathered in consortia through calls for applications. PARI is being implemented to provide a response to the many challenges of the research and innovation sector (obsolescence and degradation of equipment and infrastructure, low production of researchers, etc.). It allows for the development of regional research programmes with an impact on populations and the establishment of consortia of researchers at the regional level necessarily involving researchers from the three (03) linguistic zones (English-speaking, French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking) to improve regional integration and prepare the next generation of researchers.

111. The two (2) winning consortia are: COVID-RAM and PHYMEPALU, led respectively by Dr Victorien Tamègnon Dougnon (Benin), on the topic "Formulation of active phytomedicines against antibiotic-resistant bacteria and coronavirus: an exploration of the potential from African flora" and Professor Jean David N'guessan (Cote d'Ivoire) on the topic "Observational study and galenic formulation of phytomedicine for the treatment of malaria in the 3 ECOWAS Member States".

112. Following the adoption of the results by the 86th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, the ECOWAS Commission visited the countries of the Consortia Coordinators to present the award. On 14 August 2021, the Consortium PHYMEPALU received their award in the presence of the authorities. However, the Auditor General recommended that in the case of the Consortium PHYMEPALU, the Council of Ministers should approve the result instead of simply "taking note" as mentioned in the report of the 86th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers.

113. After discussions, Council noted that there was no winner under the Chemistry discipline. Council exceptionally authorised that a special prize be awarded to the 2nd candidate in the SVT competition, in accordance with the decision of the Jury. In addition, they directed that the same situation should not reoccur.

Item 20: Presentation of a memorandum on the ‘Lomé Declaration on Fertilizer and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel’

114. The ECOWAS Commission presented to Council the major results of the Lomé Round Table on Fertilizers and Soil Health in West Africa and the Sahel. Taking into account the common objective of ECOWAS Member States to achieve Food Sovereignty contained in the strategic guidelines of the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and the National Investment Plans for Food and Nutrition Security, Council adopted the “Lomé Declaration on Fertilizers and Soil Health in West Africa” after deliberations.

115. Council recommends that the ECOWAS Commission and Member States speed up the effective implementation of the priority actions contained in the roadmap of the Declaration, structured around four key areas:

- (i) Area 1: Improving policies, investments, financing and markets for sustainable soil health and fertilizer management;
- (ii) Area 2: Improving access to mineral and organic fertilisers;
- (iii) Area 3: Efficiency, resilience and sustainable use of fertilizers and improved soil health interventions;
- (iv) Area 4: Building institutional and human capacity for sustainable management of soil health and fertilizers.

116. The Council of Ministers took note of the report and endorsed its recommendations.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 21: Presentation of a memorandum on ECOWAS Member States' Applications for International and Regional Statutory Positions

117. To harmonize and give more chances to ECOWAS Member States' applications to vacant positions in regional and international organisations, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government 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, and subsequently set up in 2016 a 5-member Ministerial Committee, made up of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, which agreed on criteria for selecting candidates and emphasized on the importance for all countries of the Community to give full support to successful candidates.

118. For the year 2023, 23 Member States have requested support for a total of 22 vacancies, out of which elections for 8 positions have been already held, and elections for 14 vacancies were still pending. The request for support for the 8 positions were expressed by 8 countries, from which 5 were successful.

119. Regarding the 14 vacant positions, one of them, namely the position for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for the period 2026-2027 calls for arbitration since as of 30th June 2023, Guinea Bissau (requested on 28 September 2021) and Liberia (requested on 27 June 2023) are candidates for the same position. Consequently, request is made for the 5-member Ministerial Committee to help in selecting a single ECOWAS Member State for this position for which election is scheduled to hold in June 2025.

120. To facilitate its work the Committee pleaded with Member States to: (i) systematically notify to the ECOWAS Commission their applications to international and regional positions, as well as their requests for the Community support; (ii) provide accurate and complete information regarding the positions (i.e. CV translated in the ECOWAS official languages, election dates, etc.); (iii) submit their requests for support at least three (3) months before the holding of the statutory meetings to ensure their inclusion in the reports of the Commission; (iv) inform the Commission about the outcome of the election to facilitate the reporting to the ECOWAS statutory meetings.

121. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 22: Presentation of a memorandum on the implementation status of the Regional Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy

122. Following the approval granted at the 82nd Session held in Abuja, the HCD Secretariat was established in July 2019, for the development and eventual adoption in 2021 of an ECOWAS



Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy (HCD). The strategy focuses mainly on three (3) thematic areas, as follows:

- (i) Health and Nutrition
- (ii) Education, Skills and Labour participation
- (iii) Entrepreneurship, Financial inclusion, and Digital payments.

123. Key milestones achieved in the HCD Phase I include the following:

- (i) Launch of the ECOWAS Integrated HCD Strategy 2030.
- (ii) Development of the 2021 HCD Report, the ECOWAS integrated HCD Index, and ECOWAS Gender Transformative HCD Index.
- (iii) Training of the fifteen (15) Member States' National focal points on data collection, the HCD index calculation methodology, the use of the HCD Dashboard Prototype, presentation skills and data analytics.
- (iv) The ECOWAS Regional Gender Transformative Report 2021 'Towards Closing the Gender Gap' was produced to take a comprehensive look at Gender problems in the ECOWAS sub-region. Also, several deep dive reports on gender issues in West Africa were produced.
- (v) Development of the HCD Monitoring and Evaluation Dashboard which is currently in progress.
- (vi) As part of the ECOWAS Commission's role of supporting the mobilization of resources for National HCD activities, grant amounts of \$ 75,000 each are being made available to Member States to advance their National HCD strategies. So far, the following Member States have received the \$75,000 grant – Niger, Benin, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, having already developed its own National HCD Strategy, received \$585,000 for the advanced development of HCD initiatives in 13 states of the country.

124. The implementation of the Phase I was initiated in December 2019 with budget support of USD 3,992,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Additionally, an annual minimum commitment of USD 1,500,000 has also been received from the ECOWAS Commission through the community levy within the same period, to support the activities carried out to advance the HCD Strategy in ECOWAS Member States and the functioning of the HCD Secretariat as well.

125. The intended objectives for the Phase 2 of the HCD programme from Q3 2023 are –

- (i) Capacity Building within the HCD Secretariat to sustainably deliver the HCD strategy from now until 2030.
- (ii) Drive regional-level salience on HCD down to the individual country and sub-national level.
- (iii) Institutionalise regional coordination and peer learning structures.

126. Council is kindly requested to take note of the progress made so far in the implementation of the ECOWAS Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy and to continue to support its next stages of implementation.



Item 23: Presentation of a memorandum on the implementation status of the ECOWAS Fund for Regional Stabilisation and Development Fund

127. The ECOWAS Commission with support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), established the Fund for Regional Stabilization and Development (FRSD) to enhance resilience building in fragile communities. The Fund operates within the context of post-crisis stabilization and crisis prevention. This entails investments in socio-economic development measures with special attention to youth and women.

128. The Stabilization Fund is currently present in The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Niger, as well as Benin and Togo who were recently selected by the Steering Board in 2023. In The Gambia, since inception in 2019, significant results have been achieved in creating sustainable opportunities for women and youth. Preparatory processes have also advanced for replication of similar activities in Niger and Guinea Bissau.

129. In view of the development context of the region, there is a long-term relevance of the Stabilization Fund in the operations of the ECOWAS Commission, due to its ability to serve as a flexible instrument that can be used to tackle existing and emerging fragilities in the region.

130. Council is therefore being requested to give approval for the Stabilization Fund to be absorbed within the systems of the ECOWAS Commission, to serve as a long-term instrument for resilience building in fragile communities. This action would ensure the following:

- (i) Create enabling environment for long-term planning of incremental activities on resilience building in the region;
- (ii) Ensure that the capacities, learnings, and experiences gained in implementation so far are retained within the ECOWAS Commission;
- (iii) Make the Stabilization Fund a flexible instrument with capacity to design interventions for emerging fragilities in the region, with a long-term sustainable development approach;
- (iv) Give impetus for mobilization of resources from multiple external sources.

131. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 24: Presentation of a memorandum on the Agro-Pastoral, Food and Nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa

132. In accordance with previous decisions, the ECOWAS Commission presented to Council the final assessment of the 2022/2023 agro-pastoral season and the agricultural, food and nutrition situation for the same period. Agricultural and pastoral production in the ECOWAS region took place in a context marked by persistent and worsened shocks which affect people's livelihoods. These include (a) civil insecurity leading to the internal displacement of more than 7.5 million people deprived of their livelihoods (housing, productive capital, social network) and access to



education and health; it now extends to northern Togo and Benin; (b) persistent inflation resulting from the post-COVID effects and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, limiting households' ability to access production inputs and adequate nutritious food; (c) the worsening adverse effects of climate change, which weaken food systems in some areas, and the worrisome inflation (18% on average in the region), which is weighing on the prices of basic foodstuffs (up by 25% to 40% compared to the average over the last 5 years).

133. Council notes that despite the efforts made by Member States and development partners and the good performance of agro-pastoral production recorded, the food and nutrition situation in the Sahel and West Africa remains an issue for more than 30 million people who needed emergency food and nutrition assistance. Council recommends that the ECOWAS Commission and Member States continue the efforts already underway, especially the mobilisation of development partners. Given the persistent nutrition crisis affecting nearly 16.5 million children in the region and the prevalence of global acute malnutrition exceeding the emergency threshold of 15%, Council recommends that Member States and the Commission deploy all the appropriate measures required to deal with the situation.

134. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 25: Presentation of a memorandum on the Single Currency Programme

135. The ECOWAS Commission presented the memorandum on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme. The implementation of the Roadmap adopted in May 2009 and revised in February 2018 provided for the establishment of the key building blocks of the ECO zone, including the exchange rate regime, the monetary policy framework, the Central Bank system, the adoption of the name ECO and its symbol. The Commission stated that the outbreak COVID-19 stalled the launch of the ECO in 2020, which led to the formulation of a new roadmap, known as the "Roadmap for the launch of the ECO", and the adoption of a new Convergence and Macroeconomic Stability Pact in 2021, to prepare for the launch of the ECO in 2027.

136. The Commission then noted that, notwithstanding some progress in the implementation of the Roadmap for the launch of the ECO, there were delays in some activities due to insufficient human and financial resources at the ECOWAS Commission and WAMA, as well as difficulties in reaching consensus on some aspects of integration.

137. As part of the process to strengthen the multilateral surveillance mechanism, joint ECOWAS Commission/WAMA/WAMI missions were fielded between the end of March and the beginning of May 2023 to all Member States, except the 3 Member States under sanctions. Similarly, the Convergence Council, at a meeting held on 3 July 2023, adopted the ECOWAS Macroeconomic Convergence Report for 2022, prepared following these missions. It should, however, be noted that only nine countries regularly submit their Multi-Year Convergence



Programmes (MCPs) to the Commission, which does not allow for a proper assessment of Member States' convergence path.

138. In March 2023, the Ministerial Committee adopted the Financial Report of the Special Fund for the financing of the programmes of the revised Roadmap of the single currency for the financial years 2020 and 2021. The Committee also proposed amendments to Decision A/DEC.3/7/18 of 31 July 2018 establishing the Special Fund.

139. Council took note of the information provided.

Item 26: Presentation of a memorandum on the status of implementation and enforcement of Judgments and Orders of the ECOWAS Court of Justice by Member States and Institutions

140. The Vice-President of the Community Court of Justice (CCJ) presented a memorandum to the Council on the state of implementation and execution of judgments and decisions of the Community Court of Justice by the Member States and the Institutions. During his presentation, he recalled the provisions of Articles 6 and 15 of the Revised Treaty which created the Court and its mandate as defined by the 1991 and 2005 Protocols and which makes the Court a Court of Human Rights, an arbitration tribunal, a Community civil service tribunal and a Community integration court.

141. Recalling the final and immediately applicable nature of the Court's decisions, the speaker pointed out that Article 24(4) of the 2005 Protocol requires Member States to designate the competent national authority responsible for receiving and monitoring the enforcement of the Court's decisions, and that to date only ten (10) Member States have done so. He added that the non-ratification and non-domestication of the Court's Protocols by certain Member States did not make it easy to enforce the Court's decisions in those States, and that since the Court began its activities in 2001, no national court had ever referred a matter to it for a preliminary ruling in order to promote the harmonised application of Community law.

142. He then pointed out that Article 15(4) of the revised ECOWAS Treaty makes the Court's judgments binding on Member States, Community institutions and natural and legal persons, and recalled the provisions of Article 2(3) of the Additional Act A/SP.13 /02/12 on sanctions against Member States that do not respect their obligations towards ECOWAS, and that despite these provisions, most of the judgments and orders rendered by the Court have not yet been executed (only 22% of the judgments have been executed, the remainder, i.e. 129 judgments, have not yet been executed). Finally, he presented a table showing the number of judgments not executed per Member State and by the Commission, and invited the Council of Ministers to call on the Member States and the Commission to execute the Court's decisions.

143. The Council took note of the memorandum and invited the Member States and the Commission to ensure that the decisions of the Court of Justice of the Community are executed. Council also invited the Court to organize a meeting of the Community Judicial Council made of Chief Justice of Supreme Courts of Member States to enable them to reflect on ways of strengthening the level of ratification of Protocols, as well as the execution of the decisions of the Court.

Item 27: Any Other Business

144. Under this item the following issues were discussed:

- (i) On the **recruitment of local staff**, Council endorsed the request of the Commission to allow ECOWAS Representations and Agencies to recruit local support staff. The implementation modalities will be defined by the Commission.
- (ii) On the **Lungi Logistic Depot**, Council noted the works was at 90% execution and directed the Commission to accelerate the completion of the works.
- (iii) On the **construction of the Jendema-Bo Waterside Joint Border Post project**, Council applauded the commencement of the engineering design studies and urged the Commission to ensure the timely completion for construction to begin
- (iv) Council tasked the President of the Commission to propose the inclusion of some local languages in the **ECOWAS official languages**.

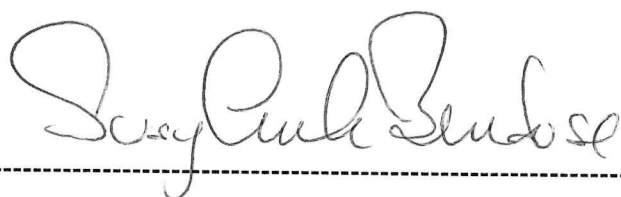
Item 28: Adoption of the Report

145. The report was adopted after amendments.

Item 29: Closing Ceremony

146. The Chairperson of Council, H.E. Suzi Carla Barbosa, in her closing remarks, thanked Council Members for their active participation and constructive contributions during the Council meeting. Thereafter, she declared the Ninetieth Ordinary Session of Council closed, and wished all participants safe journey back to their respective destinations.

DONE AT BISSAU, THIS 7th DAY OF JULY 2023



**H.E. SUZI CARLA BARBOSA
SENIOR MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION AND COMMUNITIES
CHAIRPERSON
FOR: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**



ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

NINETIETH (90TH) ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Bissau, 6th – 7th July 2023

VOTE OF THANKS

The Members of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, meeting in Bissau on 6 and 7 July 2023, express their deep gratitude to His Excellency General Umaro Sissoco EMBALO, President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, to the Government and people of Guinea-Bissau, for the warm and fraternal welcome extended to them, and for the excellent facilities made available to them to ensure the success of their work.