



# ECOWAS REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2025

*Engaging ECOWAS for a new vision on youth*

## FINAL DECLARATION BY THE ECOWAS YOUTH ON THE OCCASION OF THE SALY CONFERENCE

We, the young people of the ECOWAS region, gathered at the Regional Youth Conference held in Saly, Senegal, on July 1, 2 and 3, 2025;

### **Preamble:**

**Recalling** the ECOWAS Vision 2050;

**Recalling** further the African Union's Agenda 2063;

**Considering** the African Union Youth Charter;

**Considering further** the theme of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of ECOWAS: "*Stronger together for a better future*", as well as the theme of the ECOWAS Regional Youth Conference "*Engaging ECOWAS for a new vision on youth*".

**Aware** of the complex challenges facing our subregion, particularly in the areas of peace, stability and security, sustainable development and governance;

**Aware** also of the central role that young people must play in efforts to meet these challenges, in a difficult local, national, and international context, in particular in the face of the multiple vulnerabilities that can make young people vulnerable to certain extremist or even violent discourses;

**Reaffirming our continued commitment** to the Unity, Integration and Solidarity of the peoples and States of our West African area;

**Reaffirming further our commitment** to a peaceful, prosperous and inclusive West Africa, in an Africa that we desire to be united, strong and developed, where all the basic needs of women and men are adequately met;

**Strengthened by the exchanges and observations shared during this ECOWAS Regional Youth Conference, 2025 and to respond to the challenges that hinder our development and our active participation in the development of our region;**

**1- Affirm the need and urgency for a paradigm shift** in the elaboration of development policies in favour of youth in the ECOWAS region. In this regard, we commit ourselves to assume our role and our duties in the framework of the construction of the West Africa that we want;

**2 - Reiterate our commitment and determination** to contribute effectively to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts of which young people and women are the first victims, knowing that peace and stability are the essential conditions for our development;

**3 - Call for:**

- ***enhanced regional cooperation*** against terrorism, violent extremism, organised crime and trafficking of all kinds, with a strong involvement of young people in prevention strategies;

- ***a secure environment*** for entrepreneurship, through accessible financing and protection of small businesses;

#### **4 - With regard to governance that is truly inclusive for young people,**

**We:**

- **Call for** the effective and concrete participation of young people in political decisions that affect their present and their future. *De facto*, we ask to be duly represented in local, national and regional decision-making bodies. In this regard, we expect the rapid establishment of the West African Regional Youth Council, as well as the ECOWAS Youth Parliament, and the operationalization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC);
- **Stress** the need for the rapid establishment of a regional fund dedicated to entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives led by young people;
- **Urge** all Member States to set up budgets that are sensitive to the aspirations of the youth, by dedicating 3% of the national budget to the needs of young people;
- **Further underline** the imperative of effective decentralization in our countries with a view to a more equitable distribution of development opportunities aimed at reducing territorial inequalities, with a particular focus on often disadvantaged rural areas, on the understanding that the promotion of resilient local economies offers alternatives to forced migration and the informal economy;

#### **5- With regard to education and training adapted to economic realities, we affirm that:**

Our educational systems must evolve to meet the needs of the market, realigning with a form of education/training that takes into account the results of research, prioritises self-confidence and African identity awareness, eliminates inferiority complex in relation to other peoples, while acknowledging and harnessing the efforts made by young people in connection with development concerns, etc.

**To that end, we demand:**

- The massive integration of technical and professional training in promising sectors (digital, sustainable agriculture, renewable energies).

- A strengthened partnership between schools, universities and businesses to facilitate professional integration.
- Intra-ECOWAS academic and professional mobility, with mutual recognition of diplomas and skills.

## **6- Concerning the effective inclusion of people with disabilities**

We note with concern a persistent gap between States' legal commitments and their effective implementation, which contributes to the social and economic exclusion of many young people with disabilities:

**We therefore, call for:**

- **The harmonisation and strengthening** of inclusion policies in all Member States, with obligatory monitoring mechanisms.
- **Universal accessibility** (infrastructure, education, employment) and the active participation of people with disabilities in the development of policies affecting them.
- **Awareness campaigns** to fight discrimination and promote an inclusive society.

## **7 - Regarding a new social contract for West African youth:**

We refuse to be a sacrificed generation.

**To this end, we call on ECOWAS and its Member States to:**

- **Translate into action** the recognition of youth as a pillar of development.
- **Invest massively** in education, health, employment and innovation.
- **Establish a permanent dialogue** with youth organizations to co-construct public policies.

**For our own part:**

**We are ready**

to be agents of change and to assume our duties as true citizens of West Africa;

**However,**  
we demand that our rights, our ideas and our potential as young people be fully  
harnessed.

The future of ECOWAS is at stake today: we are committed to being at the heart of  
this transformation.

God bless ECOWAS.

God bless West Africa.

God Bless the African Continent

**LONG LIVE REGIONAL INTEGRATION WITH AND FOR THE YOUTH OF  
WEST AFRICA**

**DONE IN SALY PORTUDAL, REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL**

**THIS 03 JULY 2025**

