



FORTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

16 and 17 December 2015, Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. Under the chairmanship of **H.E. Macky Sall**, President of the Republic of Senegal and current Chair of the Authority, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held their Forty-Eighth Ordinary Session on 16 and 17 December 2015 in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Session was followed by a ceremony to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the creation of the organization.

2. The Session was attended by the under-listed Heads of State and Government or their duly- mandated representatives:

- H.E. **Thomas Boni YAYI**, President of the Republic of Benin;
- H.E. **Michel KAFANDO**, President of the Transition of Burkina Faso;
- H.E. **Alassane OUATTARA**, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire;
- H.E. **Sheikh Prof. Alhaji Dr Yahya A.J.J. JAMMEH**, President of the Republic of The Gambia;
- H.E. **John Dramani MAHAMA**, President of the Republic of Ghana;
- H.E. **Alpha CONDE**, President of the Republic of Guinea;
- H.E. **José Mario VAZ**, President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau;
- H. E. **Joseph N. BOAKAI**, Vice President of the Republic of Liberia;
- H.E. **Ibrahim Boubacar KEITA**, President of the Republic of Mali;
- H. E. **Brigi RAFINI**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Niger;
- H.E. **Muhammadu BUHARI**, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- H.E. **Macky SALL**, President of the Republic of Senegal;
- H.E. **Faure Essozimna GNASSINGBE**, President of the Togolese Republic
- H.E. **Jorge TOLENTINO**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cabo Verde
- H.E. **Dr Ebun STRASSER-KING**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone

3. The session was also attended by **Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and **Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas**, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for West Africa as observers.

4. Furthermore, **H.E. Yakubu Gowon**, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, former Executive Secretaries and Presidents of the ECOWAS Commission, as well as eminent personalities and representatives of various international organizations, socio-professional organisations and Civil Society Organisations, including religious and traditional leaders, attended the celebrations of the 40th anniversary subsequent to the Summit deliberations.

5. During their session, the Heads of State and Government took note of the 2015 Annual Report of the President of the Commission and the Reports of the 75th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, the 35th Meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, as well as the 14th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers on institutional reforms, and the end of tenure of statutory appointees. The Heads of State and Government also exchanged views on peace and security matters, particularly the new cross-border threats in the ECOWAS region.

6. The Authority welcomes the quality of the reports submitted by Council and the Commission, as well as the relevant recommendations put forward therein. It commends the excellent work accomplished by Community Institutions for the consolidation of the achievements of West Africa's integration.

7. The Summit warmly congratulates President **Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo** and expresses to him its full satisfaction for his competence and leadership qualities, as well as the services he has rendered to the Community. Furthermore, the Authority commends alongside the President of the Commission, all the statutory appointees for the conviction, dedication and efficiency with which they carried out the Community's activities and programmes over the entire period of their tenure.

8. In a crucial year characterised by the renewal of all international commitments, particularly on the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate, the Authority reaffirms its unwavering determination to do all it can to alleviate all forms of extreme poverty in West Africa.

9. After deliberations, the Summit arrived at the following specific decisions.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

10. The Authority reiterates its resolute commitment to the on-going integration process as a collective response to the region's development challenges. It undertakes, with an even

firmer determination, to sustain its efforts in the political, economic and institutional fields with a view to meeting all the challenges related to the deepening of this process.

11. The Authority urges all Member States to take full ownership and ensure the implementation of all Community acts and protocols with a view to fast-tracking the integration process.

12. The Authority urges Member States to persevere in their efforts to build more resilient economies, particularly by pursuing structural reforms, implementing sound macroeconomic policies, and ensuring diversification of economies.

13. The Authority affirms that these measures are aimed at creating an enabling environment for investment and facilitating the adaptation of their economies to external shocks to ensure sustainable inclusive growth.

14. The Authority stresses the need to step up the process for the establishment of the common market. To this end, it agrees on the need to increase the volume of intra-Community trade, make the free movement of persons and goods a reality and pay particular attention to strategic sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, energy and human capital.

15. In this context, the Authority calls on the Commission to pursue the harmonisation of sectoral policies and take all necessary measures to support the effective implementation of programmes under these different sectors

16. The Authority reaffirms the importance of employment, education, health and social protection in national development strategies.

17. The Authority urges Member States to sustain their job creation efforts, particularly for young people, by promoting public and private investments in all areas.

18. The Authority undertakes to pursue, through the implementation of relevant regional policies, the improvement of food and nutritional security as well as sustainable natural resource management.

19. The Authority welcomes the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate and underpins the opportunity afforded by this universal, differentiated and legally binding Agreement with the aim of enhancing Member States' capacities to address climate change challenges for a more resilient region. To ensure better monitoring of the implementation and expeditious mobilization of resources for the Africa Electrification Fund, the Authority recommends to appoint one (1) Head of State to champion the project on behalf of the African continent.

PEACE, SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY MATTERS

20. The Authority reaffirms the importance of peace, security and stability for the economic development of the ECOWAS region.
21. It reiterates its commitment to the standards and principles underpinning the peace and security architecture as set out in the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, as well as the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
22. The Authority equally reiterates its commitment to provide, through unity of purpose and in a more proactive way, appropriate responses to the various security threats in the region, particularly terrorism, violent extremism, maritime piracy, trafficking and other forms of organised transnational crimes.
23. The Authority expresses deep concern over terrorism in the Sahel region and condemns in the strongest terms, the terrorist attack in Bamako on 20 November 2015 as well as the Boko Haram group's recurrent terrorist acts in the Lake Chad Basin countries.
24. The Authority reaffirms its determination to relentlessly pursue the fight against terrorism and consequently underscores the need for a coordinated international struggle.
25. The Summit commends the efforts deployed by the Joint Multinational Force (JMF), welcomes the resources provided by troop-contributing countries to boost the operational capacities of the Force. It urges these countries to pursue and sustain their coordination and intelligence-sharing efforts in the conduct of their operations. It calls on all Member States to join in these efforts.
26. The Summit calls on the International Community to support the efforts being deployed by the region to effectively combat terrorism.
27. Furthermore, the Authority reiterates its call on the International Community to provide all necessary support to Nigeria, Niger and the neighbouring countries in the management of issues related to refugees and internally-displaced persons.
28. With a view to reconciling the principles of free movement of persons with security requirements, the Authority emphasizes the need to set up efficient information and intelligence sharing mechanisms and urges the Commission, in conjunction with Member States, to ensure the implementation of holistic programmes on free movement and secured border management.

29. Similarly, the Heads of State and Government are of the view that certain dress codes, which make identification of the persons concerned difficult, may considerably hinder actions geared towards protecting people and properties. They therefore urge all Member States to take, in line with their national realities, appropriate measures to ban any dress code that may make it difficult to identify people.

30. The Authority welcomes the conduct, since its last ordinary session, of credible, transparent, free and peaceful presidential elections in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

31. The Authority heartily congratulates Their Excellencies **Alpha Condé**, President of the Republic of Guinea and **Alassane Ouattara**, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on their brilliant re-election to the highest office of their countries.

32. The Authority urges all the Member States organising elections in 2016 to create a conducive environment for peaceful, free and transparent elections.

On the situation in Burkina Faso

33. The Authority heartily congratulates **H.E. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré**, on his brilliant election to the highest office of Burkina Faso.

34. With a view to ensuring sustainable development, the Summit urges the country's new political authorities to pursue the defence and security sector reform process as well as sustain efforts to consolidate democracy and reconciliation while enhancing national unity.

35. The Summit fervently appeals to the International Community to support Burkina Faso particularly in its reform process, and assist in its economic recovery programme.

36. The Authority warmly congratulates **H.E. Michel Kafando**, his government and the other transitional bodies for their commitment to ensuring a successful conclusion of the transition process in Burkina Faso. It also commends all political leaders, civil society and the people of Burkina Faso as a whole for the maturity they had exhibited. It equally welcomes the role and support of the International Community, including the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso (GISAT BF) throughout the process.

37. The Authority expresses gratitude to Their Excellencies **Macky Sall**, President of the Republic of Senegal and current Chairman, and **Thomas Boni Yayi**, President of the Republic of Benin and ECOWAS Facilitator in the resolution of the Burkina Faso crisis, for their mediation efforts that contributed significantly to the success of the transition in Burkina Faso.

On the situation in Guinea Bissau,

38. The Authority underscores the need for dialogue to consolidate peace and democracy in Guinea Bissau and in this regard, the Authority urges all stakeholders, including political parties, to be resolutely committed to dialogue for the enhancement of the country's political stability.
39. The Summit reiterates its appeal to the Guinea Bissau authorities to expedite action on the review of the country's Constitution.
40. In order to sustain the country's reform and development efforts, the Authority underpins the urgency in convening the Meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau, and instructs the President of the Commission to take the relevant measures towards organising the meeting in consultation with other stakeholders.
41. The Authority renews its appeal to the ECOWAS bilateral and multilateral partners for their financial support to continue exercising the ECOMIB mandate.
42. The Authority expresses deep gratitude to Their **Excellencies Macky Sall**, President of the Republic of Senegal and current Chairman, **Alpha Condé**, President of the Republic of Guinea and **Yahya Jammeh**, President of the Republic of The Gambia, for their leadership and positive contribution in ending the political crisis in Guinea Bissau.
43. The Authority also expresses deep gratitude to **H.E. Muhammadu Buhari**, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chairman of the Regional Contact Group, and to **H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo**, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Special Envoy to Guinea Bissau, for their significant contribution to the end of the crisis.

On the situation in Mali

44. The Authority commends the efforts of the Government of Mali for the enhancement of peace and security as well as for the measures taken to ensure the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.
45. The Authority urges all stakeholders to ensure full implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, by ensuring the effective functioning of the monitoring mechanisms envisaged for the application of the said Agreement.
46. The Authority urges the African Union and the United Nations to endorse the creation of a Rapid Intervention Force aimed at ensuring best response to the terrorism challenges in Northern Mali and the rest of the Sahel.

INSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

47. The Authority endorses the conclusions of the 14th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers on the organisational structure approving the first phase of institutional

reforms and agrees on the take-off of the second phase relating mainly to the operational process and systems, as well as the procedures.

48. The Authority consequently directs the President of the ECOWAS Commission to take the necessary measures in that perspective and requests the Council of Ministers to monitor the implementation of the institutional reforms with close attention.

49. Taking note of the end of tenure of certain Statutory Appointees of the Commission in February 2016, the Authority decides to maintain the current structure of the Commission and conduct an overall rotation of positions in February 2018 at the expiry of the tenure of statutory appointees who assumed office in February 2014. Furthermore, the Authority calls on Member States whose statutory appointees' tenure are due to end in February 2016 to nominate new statutory appointees to complete the remaining two years until the 2018 deadline.

50. Taking due account of the principles of rotation and modalities of appointment laid down in Supplementary Act A/SA.14/02/12 of 17th February 2012 governing the allocation of the positions of President and Vice-President of the Commission, the Authority allocates the position of President of the Commission to the Republic of Benin and the position of Vice-President to the Republic of The Gambia. The Authority requests the Presidents of the Republics of Benin and The Gambia to propose to the current Chairman the nomination of one their nationals for these positions from March 2016 to February 2018.

51. In order to continue providing the Community with the required resources to carry out its programmes and operations, the Authority urges Member States to settle, without delay, their contribution and payment of arrears. It further urges Member States to strictly apply the provisions of the Community Levy Protocol.

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

52. In recognition of the ECOWAS founding fathers' indefatigable commitment and esteemed contribution to West African integration, the Authority granted an honorary award to **H.E. Yakubu Gowon**, former Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and **Gnassingbe Eyadéma** of blessed memory, former President of the Togolese Republic. The Authority is extremely grateful to the founding fathers whose vision continues to guide their successors.

53. The Authority also granted an honorary award to **His Eminence Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar**, the Sultan of Sokoto and **Mr. Koffi Gbondjidé Gervais Djondo** for their respective contribution for the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of private sector in West Africa.

54. Furthermore, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their faith in the values and ideals on which ECOWAS was founded as well as their determination to enable it achieve more significant progress. They are particularly beholden to the messages delivered by the representatives of the youth, women and the private sector whose ambitions and concerns they pledge to take due account of in the implementation of various Community projects.

TRIBUTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

55. The Authority pays glowing tribute to **Mathieu Kerekou** of blessed memory, former President of the Republic of Benin, for his immense contribution to his country's development as well as in his capacity as one of the ECOWAS founding fathers for the integration process in West Africa.

56. The Heads of State and Government commend the effectiveness and commitment of the current Chairman, **H.E. Macky Sall**, President of the Republic of Senegal, exhibited in the execution of his mandate at the helm of the Authority. They also commend his strong leadership in the regional integration process and contribution to the entrenchment of the values of peace, democracy and solidarity in West Africa. They consequently pay him glowing tribute.

57. The Heads of State and Government express appreciation to all ECOWAS development, bilateral and multilateral partners for their continued and multi-faceted support for the attainment of ECOWAS objectives and the interest they show, over four decades, in the development of West Africa.

58. The Heads of State and Government express deep gratitude to **H.E. Muhammadu Buhari**, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Government and people of Nigeria, for the generous and authentic African hospitality accorded them during their stay in Abuja, as well as the quality of the organisation of this session which has contributed immensely to its success.

59. The Heads of State and Government decide to hold their next Ordinary Session in Dakar, Republic of Senegal at a date to be agreed upon after consultations.

Done at Abuja, this 17th day of December 2015

THE AUTHORITY



FORTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AUTHORITY OF ECOWAS HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 16 and 17 December 2015

VOTE OF THANKS

We, Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States, meeting in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on 16 and 17 December 2015, at our 48th Ordinary Session, express our deep appreciation to **H. E. Muhammadu Buhari**, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Government and people of Nigeria, for the authentic African hospitality extended to us as well as the excellent facilities placed at our disposal to ensure the success of our Summit.

We also pay him tribute for his commitment to peace, security and good governance and express our deep gratitude for the invaluable contribution of his country in driving the various projects of our Community.

DONE AT ABUJA, THIS 17TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2015
THE AUTHORITY