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DES ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE DE  
L'OUEST



ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF  
WEST AFRICAN STATES

**SIXTY-SEVENTH ORDINARY SESSION  
OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

Abidjan, 20 & 21 June 2013

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**ADDRESS BY H.E. Kadré Désiré OUEDRAOGO  
PRESIDENT OF THE ECOWAS COMMISSION**

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Abidjan, June 2013

**Honourable Chairman of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers,**

**Honourable Ministers,**

**Esteemed Heads of ECOWAS Institutions,**

**Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to begin my address by sincerely thanking you and your country, for the warm welcome and courtesies extended to the various ministerial delegations here present.

I would also like to thank you for your unflinching attention, and your faithful interest in the ECOWAS ideals. This availability epitomizes the unwavering commitment of Cote d'Ivoire and its Head of State, **H.E. Alassane Ouattara**, to security, peace and progress in West Africa.

This affords us utmost delight in joining you here in Abidjan today, to open the 70<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers. For this event, which is inconvertible at this time of the year, I am very much aware of the contribution your Council makes to ECOWAS, at conceptual as well operational levels. Our ability to count on you in affirming its values and achieving its objectives, Honourable Ministers, is an epitome of the originality and strength of our organization.

I thank you for this constant commitment. Please accept the expression of my gratitude and that of our Community Institutions for willingly accepting to honour our invitation.

**Council Chairman,**

## **Honourable Ministers,**

It is worth noting that at the time you are holding this session, the political and security situation is gradually becoming stable in the light of the progress recorded, particularly in the management of the crisis in Mali and Guinea Bissau.

I would like to mention the consensus of all the Guinea Bissau stakeholders on the regime pact adopted last April in preparation for the elections to be held in November 2013, which will contribute to strengthening the transitional process. This consensus was again reinforced by the recent institution of an inclusive government responsible for organizing elections and undertaking reforms.

I would also like to underscore the ongoing stabilisation efforts in Mali, most importantly, after the decisive military intervention that led to the liberation of the initially besieged cities and avoid transforming the northern part of the country into a global terrorist nerve centre.

At this point, I must once more salute the tremendous work done by all the troops in the field and pay homage to the memory of our fallen heroes. One such hero is the late General Yaye Garba, deputy Commandant of AFISMA who was taken from us suddenly on 11 May 2013.

The terrorist attacks perpetrated in Niger in the past weeks are no doubt a fall-out from the fighting in Northern Mali and call for even more vigilance on our part. When Niger is attacked, ECOWAS is attacked and I would once more express our solidarity with this Member State and our determination to spare no effort until peace is achieved throughout the sub-region.

The transformation of AFISMA into a United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission as authorised by the UNSC Resolution 2100, whose implementation will take place shortly, should consolidate these efforts.

Besides the hope borne out of this prospect, it is clear, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, that the consolidation of peace in Mali will have to go through the security phase set out in Resolution 2100. More importantly, it will also have to go through the political dimension with the organisation of free, credible and transparent elections throughout the country and a sustained national reconciliation process.

In that regard, I warmly welcome the concrete measures being taken by the competent authorities of Mali to ensure the successful holding, under the best possible conditions, of the first round of the presidential elections scheduled for 28 July 2013.

**Honourable Members of Council**, it is in the human mind that the promise of peace is engendered. I therefore commend the sense of responsibility and commitment that prevailed during the dialogue process between the authorities of Bamako and the MNLA Group which led to the signature of an Agreement by the concerned parties in a bid to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict. I particularly express, on behalf of all of us, profound gratitude to **H. E. Blaise Compaoré**, President of the Faso and ECOWAS Mediator, for the remarkable amount of work accomplished, for his strong and sustained mediation and for having personally presided over the Ouagadougou peace talks.

**Honourable Ministers,**

Beyond this update on the positive development of the situation in Mali and Guinea Bissau, we may doubly rejoice on the consolidated regional economic performance during the first-half of the year, and the considerable progress achieved in deepening the major projects of our integration process.

I will provide more details on these aspects in the Interim Report, which I will be honoured to present to Council.

However, I cannot help underscoring the decisive or rather historic turning point we are about to embark on with the finalisation of the ECOWAS CET implementation process. I welcome the participatory process with the Member States and UEMOA which led, through the meeting of Ministers of Finance held in Praia in March, to the agreement on the guidelines of this essential instrument for the consolidation of our common market.

Therefore, I would call for your unanimous political support in making the CET a reality and thereby taking an important step in the regional integration process.

No-one can dispute the need for a single trade regime in the region if we absolutely want to put in place the most appropriate conditions for intra-community trade growth, consolidation of the production fabric, and improvement of regional competitiveness. Consequently, I cannot help drawing a parallel with the negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreement.

In that regard, I consider the implementation of the ECOWAS CET as an opportunity for the resumption of the EPA negotiations on the basis of the excellent work accomplished in reviewing our market access offer. We have in fact reviewed the liberalization scenario by taking due account of its coherence with the CET and the required development needs through trade opening. The new proposals arrived

at should pave the way for renewed discussions with the European party with a view to concluding a development-oriented regional EPA. The timely conclusion of a comprehensive EPA will make it possible to forestall the potential negative impact on our integration process, of the interim EPAs signed by two of our Member States.

## **Honourable Council Members,**

It is also in the interest of supporting West Africa's economic integration that we have devoted our efforts to the establishment of juxtaposed border posts between the Member States.

This became an obvious step in light of the need to improve the flow of traffic at our borders and facilitate regional trade. I am convinced that you share this view, given the considerable importance the Heads of State and Government attach to the Protocol on Free Movement of persons and Goods.

All the issues I have highlighted will be submitted for your consideration. From the look of your agenda, this session is expected to decide on fundamental issues aimed at the enhancement of integration projects and the smooth running of our organisation.

Beyond the sectoral issues relating to competition, infrastructure and energy, the session is also expected to review the status of the major institutional reforms launched through the expansion of the Commission and the enhancement of the powers of the ECOWAS Parliament in particular.

**Honourable Ministers,** you are at the core of our decision making system and your supervisory role is of critical importance under these circumstances.

Furthermore, we have become accustomed to your strict supervision which is indeed necessary for the consolidation of peace and democracy and the integrated development of our region. In the same vein, we have come to expect that proposals, which are pertinent and practical, are made to the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

Thus, I firmly believe that your discussions will help us in overcoming the persisting obstacles to our integration process. I equally believe that you are aware that these obstacles are often harmful to the well-being of the people we serve.

I cannot conclude without expressing my deep gratitude to all our partners for their support and assistance in the implementation of our regional programmes. In particular, I would like to laud their active involvement for the success of the International Donor Conference for Development in Mali held on 15 May 2013 and, of course, the adoption of Resolution 2100 providing for a peaceful future for this country.

We are all aware of the extent to which the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, under the leadership of the current Chairman, have provided invaluable support in this process.

Lastly, on behalf of the ECOWAS Institutions, I would like to express my **sincere gratitude to H.E. Alassane Ouattara**, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, for his personal involvement in the **improvement of the security situation in the region and the consolidation of our Community building process.**

On this note, I wish you very fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.

