



Republic of Niger  
Fraternity - Labour -  
Progress  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)**

**ECOWAS PARLIAMENT**

**NIGER COUNTRY REPORT**

**Composition of the Delegation**

1. *Hon. Boukari Sani Malam Chaibou*
2. *Hon. Abdou Adamou*
3. *Hon. Amadou Djibo Ali*
4. *Hon. Fougou Boukar*
5. *Hon. Ousmane Idi Ango*
6. *Hon Ramnatou Issa Mayaki*

*First Ordinary Session, May 2021*

**Honourable Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament,**

**Honourable Colleagues,**

After two years of interrupted parliamentary activities due to the Corona Virus pandemic, today our Parliament is back in business with the holding of its first ordinary session of the year 2021

The delegation of Niger is satisfied with and welcomes the social distancing measures put in place by Member States, which helped to reduce significantly the spread of the virus in the community.

**Honourable Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Honourable**

**Colleagues members of the ECOWAS Parliament, ladies and**

**gentlemen,**

This report that I have the distinct honour to present to you has the following outline:

**I/ Political Situation**

**II/ Security situation**

**III/ Human Rights Situation**

**IV/ Health Situation**

**VI/ Status of implementation of ECOWAS Texts**

- The Protocol Relating to the Community Levy
- The Protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons and Goods
- The Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region.

## **I/ Political Situation**

The political situation in Niger has been characterised by the organisation of general elections.

### **a) Municipal and Regional Elections**

Municipal and regional elections were held on 13 December 2020 in all communes and regions of Niger. The people of Niger renewed the members of the Municipal, City and Regional Councils in an atmosphere of peace, inclusiveness and great transparency.

The process for these executives to take office is being finalised smoothly in a democratic manner.

### **b) Legislative and Presidential Elections**

#### **1) First round of presidential elections & legislative elections**

Both the legislative elections and the first round of presidential elections were held on 27 December 2020. These elections witnessed extensive international and national supervision, which was a unanimous endorsement of their good quality. This is an important guarantee of the legitimacy of the institutions that were created and of their stability.

These elections concerned Nigeriens living in the country. Because of the Covid -19 pandemic, it was not possible to organise such elections at the same time for the diaspora. Out of the one hundred and seventy-one (171) members of the National Assembly, one hundred and sixty-six (166) have been elected. There are plans to elect the five (5) MPs from the diaspora when health conditions permit.

As we speak, the National Assembly is in place, and all committees have been renewed; parliamentary networks as well as friendship groups have been set up, and positions in inter-parliamentary organisations filled.

## **2) Second Round of the Presidential Election**

The second round was held between the candidate of the majority party, Mr Bazoum Mohamed and the opposition candidate, Mr Mahamane Ousmane.

At the end the second round, Mr Bazoum Mohamed won with **55.66%** of the votes cast as declared by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and confirmed by the Constitutional Court.

It should be noted that the provisional results were fiercely challenged by the opposition. These objections faded away following the validation of the results by the Constitutional Court. The results have not yet been accepted by Mr Mahamane Ousmane. However, no demonstrations have been organised to challenge the results since February.

On 31 March 2021, two days before the swearing-in of the new democratically elected president, there was an attempted coup d'état, which was foiled. The alleged brain behind this failed attempt to destabilise the country, Captain Sani Gourouza, an officer serving at the 101 Air Base of Niamey, was arrested and remanded in custody together with several military officers, including high-ranking officers and civilian officials.

The new president elect, His Excellency Bazoum Mohamed was peacefully sworn-in on 2 April 2021.

This election has a special significance because it was the first time in the political history of Niger that a democratically elected president handed over peacefully to another democratically elected president in accordance with the law.

## **III/ Security Situation**

Since the collapse of the Libyan State, Niger continues to face threats from several sources of insecurity on its borders. This insecurity is caused by terrorist groups who, through their barbarity, have crossed all lines with the massacre of civilians perpetrated this year in the departments of Ouallam, Banibangou and Tillia.

In the Diffa region, Boko Haram has completely destabilised the economy since January 2015, as evidenced by the three (3) figures below:

- 130,000 Nigerian refugees;
- 105,000 internally displaced persons and 30,000 returnees from Nigeria, all of whom depend on humanitarian assistance.

Thus, from the extreme south-east to the north-west, including southern Maradi and some areas in the north, our country is bedevilled by deadly attacks by terrorists and highway bandits.

The people of Niger are constantly worried despite the measures taken and the support from the regional and international cooperation (G5 Sahel and Minusma).

### **III/ Human Rights Situation in Niger**

Since 2015, the human rights situation has been characterised, above all, by the resurgence of insecurity in the regions of Tillabéri (bordering Mali and Burkina Faso), which is plagued by attacks by jihadist groups; Diffa (bordering Nigeria and Chad), where the Boko Haram sect operates, and in the Tahoua and Maradi regions, where the GANE conduct their incursions.

This situation of insecurity has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population and the Defence and Security Forces through attacks on life and physical integrity and enforced disappearances. In those regions affected by conflicts, our country has recorded over recent years, a huge number of internally displaced persons fleeing clashes.

This situation has also significantly affected various aspects of human rights, notably:

➤ **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including:**

- The right to education as a result of the closure of several schools, especially in the Tillabéri region following the burning down of these schools, the desertion of teachers who received death threats from terrorists.

- The right to employment: a large number of young people have slid into unemployment following the ban on the movement of motorcycle taxis, which is their main activity.
- **Civil and political rights**, which are infringed upon mainly through restrictions on the freedom of movement as a result of measures relating the state of emergency.

This is coupled with acts of violence perpetrated by some members of defence and security forces as highlighted in the report of the fact-finding and investigation mission conducted from 20 May through 6 July 2020 by the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) into allegations relating to the disappearance of 102 persons in the Ayorou department in the Tilabéri region.

As regards the freedom of demonstration, the CNDH report found that it remains a bone of contention because in most cases, demonstrations are banned, leading to clashes between security forces and demonstrators. Against this backdrop, the CNDH has kept urging stakeholders to address the situation through legal means.

On the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, significant reforms have been made, including the amendment of the Quota Act, which has increased the proportion of either sex in elective positions from 10 to 25% and from 25 to 30% for nominative positions, the adoption of the law on the retention of girls in school up to the age of 16. Despite this progress, there remain socio-cultural constraints and customary practices that are causes of discrimination against women and children.

To effectively combat gender-based violence, a national strategy against violence has been adopted, and aims to curtail the effects of such practices through sensitisation actions.

Surprisingly, it was found by a forensic doctor that members of the Chadian defence and security forces deployed in the three border area (Niger - Mali - Burkina Faso), namely in the Téra region, committed rapes on Nigerien women and girls in the community.

Following investigations, the CNDH strongly condemned such acts, and demanded compensations to be paid.

With regard to political rights, reforms have been initiated to ensure elections are free, transparent, inclusive and peaceful. A case in point is the establishment of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). However, the lack of consensus over some provisions of the Electoral Code has caused a stir among political actors. In spite of this, the elections, on the whole, took place in an acceptable manner according to our observers (800) as well as national and international observers.

Finally, with regard to migration, several CNDH fact-finding missions reported violations of migrants' rights (corruption, abuses, torture, extortion of properties, ....etc) However, since the adoption of Act 2015-036 on the fight against migrant smuggling, sanctions have been put in place against traffickers. Additionally, the recent adoption of the national migration policy will undoubtedly help to better manage this phenomenon so that it can contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

## **IV/ Health Situation**

### **A/ Management of the Covid -19 Pandemic**

Niger would like to commend the ECOWAS Parliament for adding this item to the agenda for this session.

Since December 2019, the entire world has been confronted with the Covid -19 pandemic, which has affected all countries and continents. The resulting health crisis has engendered human, social and economic consequences, the extent of which we are far from measuring.

To deal with this pandemic, the government of Niger set up a crisis unit in February 2020 with support from its technical and financial partners, and a Technical Committee for the Management of the Response to the Corona Virus Pandemic in May by capitalising on the already existing multi-sectoral coordination mechanism (One Health) in the country for responding to disasters and emergencies.

Furthermore, to strengthen this coordination mechanism, an Inter-ministerial Covid-19 Management Committee has been set up, chaired by the Prime Minister, supported by a committee of experts and an advisory committee. All these committees are placed under the leadership of an advisory board chaired by the President of the Republic.

A comprehensive multi-sectoral plan of an estimated cost of 1.438 trillion CFA francs has been developed and adopted by the government. The health component of this plan costs 167 billion and encompasses the following six (6) strategic areas:

- Strengthening coordination;
- Strengthening epidemiological surveillance;
- Building the capacity of health services;
- Putting in place infection control and prevention
- Strengthening risk communication and community engagement;
- Breaking the transmission chain;

The strict implementation of this plan has helped somewhat to control the spread of the pandemic with a temporary decline between June and October 2020, and to contain a second wave that occurred between December 2020 and February 2021. To date, Niger has recorded in all less than 200 Covid 19 deaths.

From 29 March 2021, the fight against the pandemic has been intensified through vaccination thanks to the implementation of the National Vaccine Deployment Plan (PNDV) aimed at “contributing to the reduction of the morbidity and mortality rates of the Covid-19 disease”.

The PNDV aims to reach 11,063,018 persons aged 18 years and above, representing 47.7% of the overall population in 2021 at a total cost of 124 billion CFA Francs (purchasing of vaccines and operational cost).



Niger has received two types of vaccines. As part of bilateral cooperation, 400,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccines were received on 21 March 2021. They are expected to be administered in 2 doses to 198,000 persons.

As for the AstraZeneca vaccine, 25,000 doses were received on 29 March 2021 as part of bilateral cooperation with India and 355,200 doses on 14 April 2021 under the COVAX Facility. These 380,200 doses are expected to be administered in two doses to 184,560 persons.

With the total number of doses received so far, 382,560 persons are expected to be vaccinated, representing 3.46% of the target population.

As of 13 May 2021, 86,569 persons have been vaccinated, 62,424 persons with the Sinopharm vaccine and 24,172 with the AstraZeneca vaccine. 5,952 persons have already received the second dose.

Vaccination will continue at vaccination centres until available stocks are exhausted.

Furthermore, more than 4,000 health workers have been trained to administer all vaccines expected under the COVAX Facility or acquired through other mechanisms developed by the country.

In terms of **PROGRESS**, satisfactory results have been achieved, including:

- ✓ establishment of case management centres in all regions;
- ✓ increase of the number of testing centres at peripheral level in order to improve the quality of the case management;
- ✓ establishment of an effective mechanism to monitor air entry points;
- ✓ control of the situation, with a total of 5,325 confirmed cases, 192 deaths (3.6%) and 4,929 recoveries (92.5%) as of 12 May 2021;
- ✓ weekly incidence rate of 0.29 cases per 100,000 inhabitants as of 9 May 2021.

- ✓ Deployment of the COVID-19 Vaccine in all regions of the country.

The **CHALLENGES** in the fight against the virus remain:

- ✓ Availability of adequate quantity of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other consumables for protection.
- ✓ Relaxation of compliance with social distancing measures put in place in the fight against COVID-19 in the community, at work places, during gatherings and travels.
- ✓ Availability in adequate quantity to meet the demand when land borders are open;
- ✓ Capacity building for the main land entry points to ensure better cross-border monitoring and to meet the challenges associated with the re-opening of borders;
- ✓ Strengthening of social mobilisation at all levels for the prevention of COVID-19 in general, and sensitisation on the vaccination in particular within a context when people are being fed with toxic information by social media.
- ✓ Mobilisation of resources to enable the operational level to bring the Covid-19 vaccination to the doorsteps of communities by organising advanced mobile centres.

## **B/ Fight against Malaria**

Niger has signed up to all major international initiatives in the fight against malaria, and has put in place an effective partnership underpinned by a strong political commitment. This has enabled the country to mobilise significant resources from the government and development partners.

So far, significant achievements have been made in the implementation of the various components of the national malaria response. At the operational level, the implementation of interventions with proven efficiency as recommended by WHO has led to an improvement in the access and quality of care,

in the rate of ownership and usage of LLINs and that of IPT coverage among pregnant women and SMC among children aged 3 to 59 months.

As regards progress made, the performance review by the National Malaria Control Programme shows that the implementation of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan has led to an improvement in insecticide-treated nets coverage, access to intermittent preventive treatment, access to essential tools for diagnosis and in the management of malarial cases both at health facilities and at community level in accordance with international commitments Niger has signed up to.

In terms of **PROGRESS**, satisfactory results have been achieved over the past three years, including:

A decrease in malaria incidence from **202** cases per 1,000 inhabitants to **175** per 1,000 inhabitants between **2011** and **2020**, representing a 27% decrease).

- A sharp decrease of this incidence rate among children below the age of five years from 572 per 1,000 children in 2011 to 296 per 1,000 children in 2019, representing a 55% decrease. Among pregnant women, it decreased from 134 per 1,000 women to 67 per 1,000 women, representing a 55% decrease.
- A decrease in the case fatality rate for malaria from 4.42% in 2011 to 1.89% in 2020.

These results are the outcome of several efforts made by the government and its partners in the fight against malaria.

A case in point is the free distribution of 18,653,421 long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) during mass campaigns and on routine basis between 2011 and 2020;

- From 2013 to 2020, about 18,063,751 children aged 3-59 months received Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC) against a target of 19,124,734, representing a 94.45% coverage.

- More than 10,000,000 malaria Rapid Diagnosis Tests (RDTs) received between 2011 and 2020.

As a result, 100% of suspected malaria cases benefited from biological diagnosis. This helps to improve case management and to streamline drug management.

**More than 36,387,229 doses of malaria treatment were acquired between 2011 and 2020 for malaria case management.**

More than 9,000,000 doses of Sulfadoxine-Pyrimethamine (SP) have been acquired for the prevention of malaria among pregnant women.

This decrease in malaria incidence rate is the outcome of several efforts made in the fight against malaria, notably:

- ✓ Distribution of long-lasting insecticidal nets during campaigns and on routine basis.
- ✓ Larvae control.
- ✓ Intermittent preventive treatment for pregnant women,
- ✓ Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC) for children aged 3-59 months.

However, a lot remains to be done because malaria remains one of the major causes of morbidity in Niger.

The case fatality rate decreased from 4.42% in 2011 to 1.92% in 2020. This is an evidence of improved hospital care for severe malaria cases.

This performance is due to the capacity building of health facilities in malaria case management, notably training of health workers on malaria case management, provision of diagnosis tools and drugs for malaria case management, the implementation of the PECADOM/iCCM strategy.

The **CHALLENGES** in the fight against malaria remain:

- Improving malaria case management
- Scaling up the iCCM strategy
- Scaling up Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention among children aged 3-59 months
- Enhancing research, monitoring and evaluation by improving data availability and quality;
- Ensuring the operation of sentinel sites;
- Strengthening communication for behavioural change;
- Maintaining universal coverage for LLINs (during campaigns and on routine basis);
- Strengthening the strategy for the prevention of malaria among pregnant women;
- Strengthening vector control (indoor spraying and larvae control);
- Enhancing procurement and stock management

The progress achieved in the implementation of various malaria control strategic plans highlights important facts regarding the development of the epidemiological context, programme management, resources used and major performance results in the implementation of malaria control interventions. Continuing these efforts will undoubtedly enable Niger to accelerate the fight against malaria with a view to achieving the goal of malaria eradication by 2030.

## **V/ Status of Implementation of ECOWAS Texts**

### **A/ Protocol relating to the Community Levy (CL)**

The situation of the Community Levy was reviewed during the ECOWAS Commission mission conducted in Niger from 26 to 30 April 2021. The objective of this mission

was to assess the implementation of the provisions of the protocol relating to the Community Levy.

**B/ Summary Statement of the ECOWAS Community Levy from July 2003 to 31 December 2020 and Status of Reimbursement of the Excess Amount paid on Contribution Arrears since 2003.**

1) Summary statement of the CL from 2003 to 2020:

A reconciliation between the amounts assessed and the amounts transferred into the CL account from July 2003 to 31 December 2020 shows an amount of 34,075,522,048 CFA Francs assessed at the rate of 0.5% (after deduction from the amount assessed on the electricity imported in 2020) against an amount of 28,925,426,156 CFA Francs transferred, leaving a balance of 5,150,095, 892 CFA Francs to be transferred.

The statement is summarised in the tableau below:

2020	<b>CL 0.5% Amount assessed</b>	Amount unduly assessed on imported electricity	Amount received on the account	Amount of CL assessed and not yet paid
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D= (A-B-C)</b>
January	382,670,375	6,869,129	108,516,844	267,284,402
February	331,862,884		73,322,758	258,540,126
March	396,138,596	11,723,543	39,134,556	345,280,497
April	345,478,821	12,523,132	1,802,365	331,153,324
May	307,520,269	14,374,105	52,800,272	240,345,892
June	341,025,078	11,891,450	51,835,572	277,325,056
July	246,664,009		36,491,032	210,172,977
August	326,608,303	28,547,899	19,299,814	278,760,590
September	303,837,740		36,984,326	266,852,914
October	872,542,351		35,832,170	337,180, 181
November	360,196,280	46,081,570	48,207,090	265,907,620
December	425,197,227	15,191,116	64,274,167	345,731,944
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,139,768,933</b>	<b>147,201,944</b>	<b>588,031,466</b>	<b>3,424,535,523</b>

An analysis of the figures for 2020 in the table above, shows an amount of 4,139,768,933 CFA Francs assessed (including amounts unduly assessed on electricity imported from Nigeria in the amount of 147,201,944 CFA francs) against 568,031,466 CFA Francs transferred, leaving a balance of 3,424,535,523 CFA francs to be transferred for 2020. This balance owed by Niger is due to the fact that a total CL revenue of 3,201,836,834 CFA Francs was collected by the treasury for 2020 but not transferred on one hand, and that some amounts were assessed but not yet collected on the other hand.

#### **Amounts of ECOWAS CL provisionally assessed and transferred from January to March 2021**

**Summary statement of the ECOWAS CL from July 2003 to 31 December 2020 and Status of Reimbursement of the Excess Amount Paid on Contribution Arrears since 2003.**

**Summary statement of the CL from 2003 to 2020:**

A reconciliation between the amounts assessed and the amounts transferred into the CL account from July 2003 to 31 December 2020 shows that an amount of 34,075,522,048 CFA Francs was assessed at the rate of 0.5% (after deduction from the amount assessed on the electricity imported in 2020) against an amount of 28,925,426,156 CFA Francs transferred, leaving a balance of 5,150,095,892 CFA Francs to be transferred.

Period	Amounts assessed (1%)	Total amount paid into the ECOWAS CL account	Amounts assessed (0.5%)	Amount of CL received on the assigned account (0.5%)	Amount of CL assessed and not transferred	Excess payment made by Niger as of 31/12/ 2021
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E=C-D</b>	<b>F= B-C</b>
2003	312,540,932	238,714,770	312,540,932	238,714,770	73,826,162	
2004	1,263,635,394	900,413,848	631,817,697	657,481,925	(25,664,228 )	242,931,923
2005	1,467,344,523	981,398,123	733,672,262	733,829,526	(157,265)	247,568,597
2006	1,472,654,506	1,211,510,782	736,327,253	736,327,253	-	475,183,529
2007	1,652,265,906	1,118,206,3247	826,132,953	826,132,953	-	292,073,394
2008	1,998,710,642	1,020,372,624	999,355,321	999,355,321	-	21,017,303
2009	2,596,386,551	1,369,969,030	1,298,193,276	1,298,193,276	-	71,775,755
2010	4,843,822,012	3,356,092,056	2,421,911,006	2,469,915,676	(48,004,670 )	886,176,381



2011	5,147,585,152	3,327,142,038	2,573,792,576	2,573,792,576	-	753,349,462
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2012	4,277,254,365	2,415,607,399	2,138,627,183	2,138,627.183	-	276,980,217
2013	4,055,389,827	3,323,588,597	2,027,694,914	2,027,694,914	-	1,295,893,684
2014	4,554,225,999	4,025,979,626	2,277,113,000	2,277,113,000	-	1,748,866,627
2015	4,657,029,700	3,505,235,5165	2,328,514,850	2,328,514,850	-	1.176720,665
2016	3,962,366,315	3,289,391,278	1,981,183,158	1,981,183,158	-	1,308,208,121
2017	4,534,222,572	3,903,040,485	2,267,111,286	2,267,111,286	-	1,635,929,199
2018.	5,320,321,931	4,258,241,810	2,660,160,966	2,660,160,966	-	1,598,080,845
2019	7,737,612,859	3,395,406,211	3,868,806,430	2,143,246,061	1,725,560,369	1,252,160,151
<b>TOTAL</b>	59,853,369,186	41,640,310,539	30,082,955,059	28,357,394,690	1,725,560,369	13,282,915,849
<b>In January 2020, the Republic of Niger returned to the normal CL rate of 0.5%.</b>						13,282,915,849
<b>The excess payment by the end of 2019 is: 11,355,480 CFA Francs</b>						49
<b>NIGER'S CONTRIBUTION ARREARS (CFA Francs)</b>						3,559,890,483
<b>BALANCE OF EXCESS PAYMENT AS OF 31/09/2020 CFA Francs (Update 300419)</b>						4,662,975,698
2020(*)			3,992,566,989	568,031,466	3,424,535,523	5,060,049,668
<b>TOTAL</b>	59,853,369,186	41,640,310,539	34,075,522,048	28,925,426,156	5,150,095,892	(90,046,224)

**(\*) CFA Francs 3,992,566,989 = 4,139,768,933 CFA Francs – 147,201,944 CFA Francs**

2) Status of reimbursement of the excess payment on contribution arrears since 2003

The mission reconciled CL figures at the rate of 1% and at the statutory rate of 0.5% with payments made into our account from 2004 to 31 December 2020 to compute the net balance of contribution arrears and the balance of excess payments. The analysis of Niger's situation in column F of the table above is summarised as follows:

CONTRIBUTION ARREARS OF NIGER CFA Francs	a	3,559,890,483
EXCESS PAYMENT MADE ON THE CL AT THE INCREASED RATE OF 1%	b	13,282,915,849
BALANCE OF EXCESS PAYMENT AS OF 31/09/2020 CFA Francs (Update 3004 19)	c = b - a	9,723,025,366
TOTAL AMOUNT REIMBURSED As of 31/12/ 2020	d	4,662,975,698
BALANCE TO BE PAID TO NIGER AS OF 31/12/2020 (Update 31/12/20)	e=c-d	5,060,049,668
CL assessed and not yet transferred December 2020	f	<b>5,150,095,892</b>
Net balance owed by Niger on the excess payment	g = f - e	<b>90,046,224</b>

The table shows that the balance of the excess payment has been fully offset by the remaining balance owed by Niger on the CL assessed but not yet transferred, meaning Niger now owes a net amount of 90,046,224 CFA Francs as of 31 December 2020.

## **Free Movement of Persons and Goods**

### **a) Free Movement of Persons**

The free movement of persons is impeded by the outbreak of Covid-19. Indeed, the closure of land, air and sea borders has not made this process easy. Now people can heave a sigh of relief with the opening of air borders.

### **b) Free Movement of Persons**

In accordance with the treaty establishing it, ECOWAS aims, among other objectives, to promote cooperation and integration within the context of West African Economic Union in order to improve the standard of living of its citizens, to maintain and enhance economic stability, strengthen relations between Member States and to contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.

To achieve this objective, ECOWAS has embarked on the creation of a common market through:

- Trade liberalisation through the elimination of import and export customs duties on goods and the abolition of non-tariff barriers between Member States with a view to creating a free trade area at the Community level.
- Establishment of a common external tariff and a common trade policy applicable to third countries.

To facilitate the realisation of this common market, ECOWAS has created an instrument known as "Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS)". The TLS is a tool for effective implementation of a free trade area. Its mechanism ensures the free movement of goods without the payment of customs duties and taxes that have the equivalent effect as goods imported into the ECOWAS region. Additionally, it helps to cut down on the numerous administrative formalities at the borders.

The TLS was established in 1979 and originally covered only agricultural products and handmade crafts. Since 1990, it has been expanded to include industrial products

In the early 2000s, ECOWAS adopted new texts on the TLS to improve its operation, namely:

- Protocol A/P1/1/03 of 31 January 2003 relating to the definition of the concept of products originating from Member States of the Economic Community of West African States;
- Regulation C/REG.3/4/02 of 23 April 2002 establishing the procedure for the approval of originating products to benefit under the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme.
- Regulation C/REG.4/4/02 adopting a certificate of origin for products of ECOWAS origin.

These different texts aim to define the concept of originating products and the origin criteria applicable to industrial products. Therefore, all industrial products must comply with these rules of origin to benefit from the TLS.

The TLS is open to any company located and operating in any of the 15 ECOWAS Member States, which intends to export its products within the region. All eligible companies are required to comply with the rules set out in the protocols and regulations governing the TLS. Companies operating in free zones and under any other special economic regime or in any other customs territory are excluded from the benefits of the TLS. All eligible companies may submit an application for accreditation to the National Accreditation Committee (NAC) of the Ministry in charge of Industry for processing and onward transmission to the ECOWAS Commission for validation.

In Niger, the National Committee for the Accreditation of Industrial Products to the TLS was established by Decree No 058/MC//PSP/DDI of 7 October 2005 on the establishment, functions, organisation and operation of the National Committee for the Accreditation of Industrial Products to the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS).

The Committee is responsible for reviewing applications for accreditation submitted by companies and making recommendations to the accreditation authority.

The Committee is made up of representatives of the ministries of trade, industry, finance (customs), foreign affairs, cooperation, African integration and Nigeriens abroad, the ECOWAS National Unit and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

### **Equality of Rights Between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region**

Women and girls are invaluable human resources for Niger. The female population accounts for 50.6% of the total population. The government recognises that the country's sustainable development goals can only be achieved with the full participation of women and girls.

Niger is firmly committed to accelerating the empowerment of women and girls and the realisation of their human rights in a country free of all forms of gender-based violence. The country is party to a number of international and regional treaties and conventions that enshrine the rights of women and girls for which periodic reports are regularly produced.

These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its supplementary protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its supplementary protocols, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Efforts have been made for the domestication of these treaties and conventions.

At national level, Niger has put in place a legal framework in line with international standards, which supports the realisation of all human rights of women and girls.

.Hence,

- the Constitution, under Article 10, enshrines the equality of all before the law. Article 22 stipulates that "the State shall take measures to combat violence against women and children in public and private life". The Criminal Code of Niger (amended in 2008) imposes heavy penalties for acts of violence in various forms, such as assault and battery, violence, female genital mutilation, breach of decency, sexual harassment and rape.
- The Reproductive Health Act (2006) restates the universal nature of the right to reproductive health. A quota law (25% of women in appointive positions and 10% in elective positions) was passed in 2000 and its implementation decree in 2001. This law was amended in 2014 to increase the quota for elective positions from 10 to 15%. In 2019, the same quota law was amended to increase the quota for elective positions from 15 to 25% and that of appointive positions from 25 to 30%.

For example, the number of women in the previous legislature was 29. This number is now 51 during the new term that we have started.

- In 2017, the government signed a formal decree of commitment to girls' enrolment in school and training. This includes the establishment of the legal framework for the protection of girls during their education. The law provides that modern law prevails over customary law; Article 63 of Act 2004-50 of 22 July 2004 stipulates that "customary law applies only to matters relating to personal status, family, divorce, marriage, ancestry or descent (paternity or maternity), inheritance, gifts and wills, and property, and cannot contravene the provisions of international conventions ratified by Niger or those applicable in issues relating to public security or individual freedoms.

With a view to operationalising the aforementioned constitutional principles and translating government's national and international commitments to gender equity and equality into action, Niger adopted a National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2008, revised and adopted in 2017.

To support the mainstreaming of gender and child protection into plans and budgets, the Government of Niger has established an institutional and organisational framework and developed policies and strategies.

The main policy and strategic documents are: the National Gender Policy (PNG), the National Strategy for the Economic Empowerment of Women (SAEF), the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence and their action plans, the National Programme for the Promotion of Women's Leadership in Niger, the implementation of the Spotlight Programme, the child protection framework document and the decree on the protection, support of young girls during their education.

A National Observatory for Gender Promotion (ONPG) was set up in 2015 and placed since 2017 under the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure the monitoring and evaluation and to permanently issue alert on respect for gender equity. It is worth mentioning the establishment of Gender Units in sectoral ministries for gender mainstreaming in all sectors.

A second generation national action plan has been adopted for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda for the 2020-2024 period.

The combined efforts of the government and technical and financial partners have helped to reduce the prevalence of some types of GBV. A case in point is female genital mutilation (FGM), the prevalence of which decreased from 5% in 1998 to 2% in 2012 as well as child marriage before the age of 15, the proportion of which also decreased from 28% in 2006 to 24% in 2016. The strategies implemented have helped to roll back such practices.



The implementation of the National Gender Policy has made it possible to place the empowerment of girls and women at the core of actions through programmes that offered them more opportunities to enjoy their rights, including women's participation in the household decision-making process. Public policies intend to provide an effective response to the management of GBV survivors through the implementation and operationalisation of holistic victim management centres in all regional capitals of Niger.