



Speaker, ECOWAS Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis

## Parliament solicits Nigeria's support on direct election ...Decries banditry, insurgency in the Region

**T**he ECOWAS Parliament has solicited the support of President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, in its quest to actualize the direct election of Members of Parliaments (MPs) into the Community Parliament.

The Speaker, Rt. Honourable (Dr.) Sidie Mohamed Tunis

made this call in his welcome address to the Plenary, at the opening of the 2021 Second Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria, on Monday, 29 November, 2021.

Dr. Tunis explained that direct elections into the West African Regional Parliament will enable it function more

effectively, independently and reinforce its legitimacy in the minds of the citizens of the sub region.

“We brainstormed on the possibility of attaining this democratic reform and setting the parliament up as a truly democratic body. This quest is not only a democratic quest; it's

a requirement that must be fulfilled to establish sustainable democracy in the region”, Speaker Tunis noted.

Continuing, he stated: "I am, therefore, humbly pleased to make use of this glorious opportunity, to call on President Muhammadu Buhari to please consider granting this advocacy your fullest support. We are convinced that with your support, we are on our way to a safe landing”.

Dr. Tunis recalled that, earlier at an Extraordinary Session of the Parliament in Winneba, Ghana, he had also requested the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo to champion the same cause.

Additionally, he stated that in working towards attaining the aspirations for direct elections, Parliament had requested Mohamadou Issoufou, the immediate past President of the Republic of Niger, to serve as Chief Advocate, with Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, a former President of the ECOWAS Commission, serving as Assistant Chief Advocate.

“Having been assured of their concurrence, we set out to address the following key areas:

- The modalities for the conduct and financing of the election of Members to the ECOWAS Parliament.

- The electoral Code for the election; as well as the proposal for the code of conduct for candidates in the election.

Two weeks ago, I headed a delegation of the ECOWAS

Parliament for a study visit to the Republic of Niger”, Speaker Tunis revealed.

Pursuant to Article 18 of the Supplementary Act A/SA.1/12/16 relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament, which stipulates that 'Representatives shall be elected by direct universal suffrage by the citizens of the Member States, Speaker Tunis further underscored the election of Members of Parliament by direct universal suffrage as a flagship political program of his mandate, as he had announced at the inauguration of the 5th legislature in March 2020.

On the security situation in the Region, the Speaker decried the prevalence of banditry, insurgency and kidnapping in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other parts of the region, while he expressed concerns about the apparent rise of security challenges in recent months.

Rt. Hon. Sidie Tunis said “Crime against persons, including murder, rape, and robbery has grown in scale. We condemn in the strongest terms all acts of banditry, insurgency and kidnapping and commend the Nigerian Government for remaining steadfast in its commitment to fight the evil ones. I also call for greater surveillance across our borders and admonish each Member State to be its brother's keeper”.

The Speaker noted that the Session was a “Budget Session” and therefore appealed for greater accountability and transparency in the execution of the budget. According to Tunis, “It is also not enough that the budget surmounts the immediate threats brought upon us by COVID-19, it should also advance efforts to make progress on other fronts and priorities, which our region continues to value: democracy, rule of law, peace and conflict resolution, the fight against terrorism, poverty reduction and climate change.

“We note that peace in our region can only be consolidated and sustained if we bring development to our people. Therefore, in the exercise of our oversight responsibility as enshrined in Article 7, Paragraph C of the Supplementary Act, we must seek for greater accountability and transparency in the execution of the budget”.

Furthermore, he expressed concerns about the political situation in Mali and Guinea but applauded the people of Cape Verde for a successful presidential election. Finally, Speaker Tunis advised the people of The Gambia to also be peaceful in the conduct of their presidential elections, an advice which was obviously heeded as the election had since been successfully conducted and concluded.

## Greater Regional Integration, Catalyst for Enhanced Cross-Border Trade- President Muhammadu Buhari



Prevalence of COVID-19 hinders free movement of goods and people

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The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H. E. Muhammadu Buhari has called on members of the ECOWAS Parliament to ensure the actualization of regional integration in view of the collective economic growth of Member-States. President Buhari made the call at the opening of the 2nd Ordinary Session on November 30th, 2021, where he emphasized that regional integration is vital to the collective well-being of the citizens.

Represented by President of the Senate and Chairman of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, President Buhari said: “Regional Integration is core to us all and demands our attention because of its importance to our commerce, trade, investment, collective and economic growth”.

He stated that this has become imperative as it comes on the

heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its lingering effects on the economy, as well as the trading activities of Member-States. He further noted that the disparity left in the wake of COVID-19 is staggering and required that all hands be on deck to stem the loss of income and livelihood, through the definition and eventual implementation of trade strategies across West A f r i c a . President Buhari commended Members of Parliament for the enactment of policies that would ultimately drive the improvement of the lives of the citizenry. In his words, “There's a need for the initiation of programmes and policies that center around the well-being of our people, besides the peace and prosperity of our nations”. Additionally, he restated the need to fully accelerate these policies if we are to achieve the total eradication of poverty across the sub-region.

Speaking further, the President

reiterated the importance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session as a vehicle to drive the institution's goals for Parliamentary Interventions, enabling the citizens to remain the core focus of Parliament's interventions. “These interventions are citizen-driven, given the place of Parliamentarians in governance arrangements”, he emphasized. In this vein, President Buhari implored the Parliament to maximize the opportunity of the Ordinary Session by highlighting and reinforcing previously reached conclusions and recommendations intended to spur growth and development.

“The chances we have for deliberations are therefore not just scenarios for the expression of the people's wishes and aspirations, but also the strengthening of earlier positions in the direction of our growth and developmental goals”, he concluded.



The President of the ECOWAS Commission,  
Jean Claude Kassi Brou (P3)

## Highlight of the State of the Community address (December, 2021) – Kassi Brou

Pursuant to Article 9 (Mandatory referral) of the Supplementary Act on the Enhancement of the powers of Parliament, which requires the mandatory referral of Annual Reports of Community Organs and Institutions shall be fulfilled.

Parliament's opinion was adopted with the rendering of the Report by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou.

That statutory requirement was performed in Plenary at the inception of the 2021 Second Ordinary Session of the Parliament and elicited animated reactions and intense debate among Members of Parliament.

President Kassi Brou's Report on the Status of implementation of the Community Work Programmes, centered on five thematic areas:

- COVID-19 Pandemic

(Health).

- Security and Political Development - Insecurity in the Sahel region.
- Economic Outlook - Implementation of economic and finance programmes.
- Key Programmes of the Commission (Available on: [www.ecowas.int](http://www.ecowas.int))
- Other Institutions' Programmes

Below is an overview of the December, 2021 Status of the Community Report:

- (a) Persistence of COVID-19
- Africa (21/11/21) : 8,581,900 cases (3.3 % of global cases) with 221,593 deaths (4.3 % of global)
  - ECOWAS Region: Number of cases x 3 and deaths x 3.5 (February 2020 – October 2021)
  - Vaccination campaigns in Member-States ongoing but insufficient to cover 40%.
- (b) High security threats

continue to raise concerns-

- In the Sahel Region (Mali, Niger, Burkina-Faso) and Nigeria
- Growing number of internally displaced persons and refugees
- (c) Persistent economic and financial challenges for Member States

### COVID-19 Pandemic:

Speaking on the preparedness and response strategies of the sub-region, the President of the ECOWAS Commission said, that the sub-region is working on producing its own Covid-19 vaccines as soon as possible, to increase the rate of vaccination of citizens. President Kassi Brou said that the West African Health Organization, (WAHO) and Health Ministers of Member-States, are working assiduously to ensure that Member States do not have to completely depend on external

aids or the benevolence of the developed nations alone for vaccines supplies. President Kassi Brou was speaking against the backdrop of redefining health interventions on a pan West African basis, occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic.

He informed The Plenary that ECOWAS is working with recognized companies in Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana, who have the capacity to produce vaccines, and added that this would come with some funding assistance from ECOWAS. “Ministers of Health of the 15 Member-States have met many times to coordinate and take actions to address the various challenges, vaccination availability and so there is very close coordination among Member-States. Clearly, we need funding and also, what it takes to produce the vaccines”.

He added that WAHO would be in a better position to give details on schemes being adopted in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 variants. “It is true that we are largely at low rate of vaccine and we need to spike this rate. One of the major concerns is the availability of vaccines.”

However, majority of interventions by Members of Parliament, centred on concerns over the seeming low rate of vaccination in Member-States, due to reliance on Western supplies. Some other Members of Parliament decried what was described as inequity in the distribution of Covid-19 relief materials across

Member-States. Some insisted their constituents did not receive the palliatives from the ECOWAS Commission.

Another burning issue that attracted robust debate by MPs was 'vaccine nationalism'. While condemning the discriminatory attitude of some countries towards Africans who were vaccinated in their home countries before travelling to Europe and other countries they unanimously supported the view that Africa must begin to take its destiny in its hands by joining the race for vaccine production.

## SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:

### (a) ECOWAS Electoral Assistance

- Presidential Elections : Niger, Benin, Cabo Verde and The Gambia (December, 2021)
- Legislative Elections in Cabo Verde

### (b) Political situation in Mali

- ECOWAS Suspension of Mali maintained
  - Individual sanctions taken
- Main issue: Respect of timetable for election in February, 2022

### (c) Political situation in Guinea: September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Coup

- ECOWAS Suspension of Guinea maintained
- individual sanctions taken
- Appointment of ECOWAS Special Envoy to Guinea

## Insecurity in the Sahel Region:

The ECOWAS Commission's President also reported on the inter-play of insecurity, famine and the implications for peace and development in the region.

In the ensuing discussions, some Members of Parliament warned that no country in the region is insulated from terrorism and Coup-d'état.

In those interventions, Members of Parliament bemoaned the lack of respect for Recommendations and Resolutions passed by ECOWAS Parliament. They strongly advocated urgent and further enhancement of powers of Parliament beyond the provisions of the Supplementary Act: They insisted that the Parliament be given more powers so that it can be more effective and efficient, thereby commanding respect towards its instruments by relevant Community machineries.

### Single Currency:

- 2020 COVID 19 Context: Member Countries faced with challenges to comply with convergence criteria

• Macroeconomic Convergence and Stability Pact among ECOWAS Member States adopted in June 2021:

- Convergence phase from 01 Jan. 2022 – 31 Dec. 2026
- Stability phase starts 01 Jan. 2027

- Macroeconomic convergence performance in the first half of 2021 improved

### • Launch the ECO: 2027

Members of Parliament expressed reservations on the reasons adduced by the Report for shifting the Single Currency goal of 2020 to 2027.

# Highlights from Country Reports:

## - Political Situation

- Parliament of Sierra Leone has approved the appointment of the Western Area Electoral Commissioner to fill the existing vacancy, as the country prepares for general elections in 2022 and 2023.
- The Government of Sierra Leone, in a bid to promote gender empowerment, has introduced a Bill that will ensure that at least 30% of elective and appointive positions are held by women. The Bill also aims at improving women's access to finance and linking government spending to improving gender equality.
- Cabo Verde has held free and transparent legislative, local and presidential elections with peaceful democratic alternations of power.
- The political situation in Niger has been characterized by the organization of general elections - Municipal and regional, legislative and presidential. Niger's Country Report noted that despite the initial challenges, the new President-elect, His Excellency, Bazoum Mohamed was peacefully sworn in. The elections, the Report revealed, was significant owing to the fact that, it was the first time in their political history that a democratically elected President handed over peacefully to another democratically elected President, in accordance with the laws of the country.
- Togo's political actors adopted several proposals in several areas, particularly the electoral framework.
- In The Gambia, the proliferation of media houses and plurality of political conversations are a collective testimony of Government's resolve to uphold freedom of expression as guaranteed in its 1997 constitution.
- The Gambia's National Assembly has passed a bill on access to information which has been assented to by the President.
- Government of The Gambia is committed to strengthening governance institutions as well as to creating new ones when the need arises.
- Nigeria's Country Report noted that while the Nigerian political space has been agog with expectations of an invigorated electoral process, the Nigerian Federal Government is committed to restoring electoral confidence in its citizens.
- In furtherance of the Federal Government's commitment to protecting the rights of citizens, Nigeria's National Assembly has intensified effort on amending the 1999 Constitution.
- The Government of Burkina Faso has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to democracy and the rule of law with the following governmental actions-
  - Revision of electoral code
  - Election of chairs of local authority councils by direct universal suffrage.
- The Republic of Cote d'Ivoire has taken concrete steps towards national reconciliation and political dialogue.
- Guinea-Bissau's Report to Parliament indicates there were no significant changes in the country's political and social situation. The different organs of sovereignty continue to manage the post-electoral situation arising from the legislative and presidential elections in March and December, 2019, respectively.
- The Republic of Benin reported that after two unsuccessful attempts in the first two years, a major constitutional review which includes profound modifications was passed by the National Assembly and promulgated by the President-
  - Organization of general elections from 2026.
  - Increasing women's representation in the Assembly
  - Limiting the number of terms of MPs which must no longer exceed 3 terms
  - Clarification of the two terms of the President of the Republic (two terms at most in the life of a President)
  - Sponsoring candidates for the election of the President
- Abolition of death sentence, amongst others.

## -Health Situation

- Cote d'Ivoire's Country Report to Parliament indicates that 4,418,958 doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered from 1 March to 27 November, 2021. The data on the country's spate of COVID-19 vaccination was attributed to the Minister of Health, Public Hygiene and Universal Health Coverage.
- COVID-19 remains the main focus of health combat for authorities of Guinea-Bissau. Currently, the Member State has declared a state of alert within its entire national territory, until the end of January 2022.
- Niger reported that of recent, the situation of Covid-19 in the country, although under control, remains worrisome. The Country Report stated that "Since early October 2021, we have seen an increasing number of new Covid-19 cases being reported. The number of cases recorded in October 2021 doubled compared to September 2021, with 167 and 343 cases respectively. The average number of cases recorded per day in October is about 10 cases."
- Niger's Country Report noted that, in view of rising cases, government has taken historic measures to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Togo has taken various social and economic measures to lessen the negative impact of the pandemic on its citizens, including cash transfer programme for the most vulnerable and free water and electricity for identified social groups.!
- Togo's Report also showed that as of November 24, 2021, a total of nearly 5,000,000 doses were received by the country, with a total of more than 1,660,000 people vaccinated. "It should be noted that in a global assessment on the management of the pandemic carried out by the Lowy Institute, an independent think tank, Togo ranks at the top of the table by placing 2<sup>nd</sup> on the continent and 15th in the world", the Report stated.
- The COVID-19 Report from Benin noted a record of positivity index of 1.3%, with an overview as follows:
  - Confirmed: 24,850;
  - Recovered: 24,656 or 99.2% recovery rate;
  - Deaths: 161;
  - Under treatment: 33 including 1 in intensive care;
  - Number of PCRs conducted: 970,760 or 8.0% of the population; and
  - The average positivity index is about 2.6%.
- Since The Gambia's introduction of vaccines about the first quarter of 2021, efforts are being made by the Government, through the Ministry of Health to vaccinate the required targeted population across the country.
- The Gambia's Report noted that as of November 2021, "we can report that at least 21% of the targeted population has now had a full dose of vaccine of either AstraZeneca, Sino pharm or Johnson & Johnson.
- Burkina Faso reported that President Roch Marc Christian KABORE has made health care free for pregnant women and children aged zero to five years old. According to the Country Report, this free health care will be gradually extended to modern contraception as a powerful means of expediting the harnessing of demographic dividend.
- Nigeria's Report stated that in further pursuance of the country's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project, the Federal Government recently received approval from The World Bank's Board of Directors for a \$400 million credit, in additional financing from the International Development Association (IDA).
- Nigeria's Report indicated that the \$400 million credit is to provide upfront financing for the acquisition of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, as well as strengthen the country's health system interventions, such as enhancing capacity for health-emergency response, cold chain equipment, disease surveillance, data management, and laboratory testing for the long-term.
- The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) received a financial grant from the World Bank for the implementation of the Sierra Leone COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project (SLCEPRP).

# State of Implementation of Community Texts

## TOGO

The Country Report noted that Togo continues to implement its community commitments.

Togo continues with efforts to improve its financial practices and situation in the management and implementation of the Community Levi Protocol.

Regarding free movement of persons, goods and services, regulatory measures are taken to eliminate red tape at the borders, the Country Report stated.

Togo's legal and institutional context remains increasingly favourable to gender, according to the report.

Under Togo's legal instruments and by way of illustration, the Report said that, the breviary of the reforms remains their fundamental law, the 1992 Constitution (Articles 2, 11, 37, 33 recognize the equality of all citizens without any distinction), the Code of Persons and the Family, revised in 2012 and amended in 2014, the 2015 Penal Code, the 20128 Land and State Code (Articles 8 item 8; 12; 13 item 2; 14, items 3 and 5; 628) and finally the 2013 Electoral Code (Article 220 enshrines gender parity on electoral lists; Article 225 halves the amount of the election bond for female candidates).

According to the Report, the inclusion/representation of women in decision-making bodies/offices has improved remarkably in recent years.

It noted that, the current Government, (October, 2020)

headed by a woman, has a total of 35 ministers, including 12 women, or 34.30%.

The Government continues to provide support to women through certain key sectors, namely education, health, protection and empowerment of women.

In education, the level of education of girls and women has improved significantly, thanks to incentive measures offered by the State.

Several structural programmes have increased access to low-income women, especially those in the rural area.

The issue of people living with disabilities and inclusion remains at the heart of the Government's actions.

Togo's Report indicated that its government is mindful that regional integration and free movement of persons and goods are priorities of ECOWAS and as such is committed to the implementation of Community texts.

## CABO VERDE

The Country Report noted the following:

- There is continuous efforts on the part of Government of Cabo Verde towards the ratification of the various Community texts that are yet to be ratified.

- There is also an increasing flow of immigrants to Cabo Verde and the report noted the commitment of government to continue to implement administrative and improve legal measures that guarantees all citizens' right to live in Cape

Verde.

- Cabo Verde is finalizing its internal action plan which will enable it to comply with the decision taken in June 2012 by the Authority of Heads of State and Government, regarding the introduction of the biometric identity cards and passports in all Member-States.

- Legislation has been empowered and strengthened, increasing some penal frameworks on sexual abuse and violence against children and adolescents.

The National Action Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour - PANPETI was prepared, approved by the Council of Ministers through Resolution no. 43/2014, of the BO, I series, no. 35 of 2nd June.

Cabo Verde has been making continuous efforts to analyze the situation of women in all spheres of life and to identify areas of persistent inequality.

The connection between Praia and Dakar in Senegal has improved considerably with the entry into the air route of the Air Senegal and Trans-Air companies.

The Cabo Verde/Lagos air link is also planned, a measure with great impact, from a commercial point of view.

Likewise, the renewable energy network continues to expand, with a target of 50% in the next few years.

In the transport sector, the construction of a competitive and safe Integrated Transport System is underway.

Air transport and its infrastructure are being



developed in order to respond efficiently and at an acceptable cost, as urgent/emergency needs in the economic context.

Cabo Verde has elaborated and implemented a strategy to create an Air Hub, on the island of Sal and to privatize TACV.

A new plan is underway to resume the tourism development process as a key sector of the Cabo Verdean economy.

Government of Cabo Verde has promoted assistance to those who are affected by disability, old age, incapacitating illnesses, unemployment and other vulnerabilities.

Integrated policies are being implemented in the area of the Environment, aimed at ensuring greater environmental sustainability, competitiveness and territorial organization.

The Member State continues to make efforts to meet its commitments regarding its debts to ECOWAS.

Cabo Verdean Members of Parliament, as a delegation, have been implementing the strategic communication agenda with the media in Cabo Verde.

### **GUINEA-BISSAU**

The Guinea Bissau Country Report notes as follows:

- National People's Assembly ratified 14 more texts that are at the stage of promulgation by the President of the Republic.
- The ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons, goods and services is being implemented in a satisfactory manner.
- The issuance of ECOWAS Identity Cards to citizens of

Guinea-Bissau, which began in March 2018, is consolidated and is progressing normally.

### **NIGER**

According to the Country Report presented to the Plenary by Niger delegation, Government of Niger has put in place a legal framework in line with international standards, which supports the realization of all human rights of women and girls.

The combined efforts of the government and technical and financial partners have helped to reduce the prevalence of some types of Gender Based Violence.

### **BENIN**

• Benin has made commendable efforts with regard to the implementation of protocol A/P1/7/96, relating to the conditions of application of the Community Levy. Thus, arrangements are being made to gradually clear the arrears.

• Benin applies the Community Levy (PC) on customs procedures in accordance with the provisions of the said Protocol.

• The Ministry of Economy and Finance has taken measures to ensure that (CL) revenues collected by customs units are directly transferred to the ECOWAS accounts.

### **BURKINA FASO**

Burkina Faso Country Report showed that-

- The Member State has no arrears with respect to the Community Levy.
- Measures have been taken to

avoid the accumulation of (CL) payments into the ECOWAS account.

• The main challenge is the direct repayment of CL proceeds into the ECOWAS accounts opened at the BCEAO. This requirement has been met since February 2018 when all CL proceeds collected by customs are paid directly into the ECOWAS accounts at the BCEAO. This practice is the norm to this day, the report concluded.

• In order to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men, initiatives have been taken by the government of Burkina Faso to address the situation.

• Activities have been implemented to bridge the gap in terms of girls' enrolment in school.

• Equality between girls and boys at the primary level has been achieved.

### **THE GAMBIA**

• The Gambia's Country Report revealed that its Government is determined in the pursuit of its commitment to leave no youth behind, as it recognizes that the youth are the engines of growth and an essential pillar for any development.

• In July this year, a team of ECOWAS Community Levy Mission visited the Gambia to assess, among other issues, the level of the country's application and compliance with the Community Levy Protocol, the regular deposits of the amount collected into ECOWAS account at Central Bank, and the application of the

levy rate on imports of goods for human consumption.

- The report concludes that, The Gambia is ever committed to the ideals of the Regional Bloc and shall never relent in its efforts for the integration process of the ECOWAS Community.

### SIERRALEONE

- Report to the Plenary by the delegation of MPs from Sierra Leone indicated that a total of 37 companies registered under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), of which four companies are still active and exporting products (Ethanol, Vegetable Oil and Juice).

- In the year under review, significant progress was made in the implementation of the CET as Sierra Leone adopted 152 of the 177 ECOWAS CET tariff lines

- Noted positive signs of economic recovery in the key sectors of agriculture, forestry and industry, with real GDP projected to rebound to 3.2 in 2021 from 2.2 percent in 2020.

- Total interest payments on government debt increased to Le0.72 trillion (21.2 percent of domestic revenue) compared to Le61, trillion (22.8 percent of domestic revenue) in 2020.

- The Leone was redenominated on August 11, 2021 to eliminate the effects of hyperinflation, reintroduce coins and reduce cost of carrying large volumes of bank notes and its associated risks.

- The Report also indicated that external sector performance is expected to deteriorate by end of 2021 as

current account deficit is expected to narrow to US\$673.1 million (14.9 percent of GDP) in 2021, compared to US\$702.8 million (18.6 percent of GDP) in 2020.

- Furthermore, it showed that capital account balance is expected to grow by 32.1 percent to US\$115.6 million (2.6 percent of GDP) in 2021 compared to US\$87.5 million (2.3 percent of GDP) in 2020.

- Sierra Leone is up to date in the payment of Community Levy paying Le13,622,194,101.58 (US\$1,235,616.10)

- Though the Member State is committed to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of goods, persons and right of establishment, it is yet to start issuance of the ECOWAS biometric identity card.

- The Government is committed to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment with the launching of the Hands Off Our Girls campaign by the First Lady.

- The Government is committed to environmental protection and sustainable utilization of its natural resources and it is manifested in Cluster Seven of the Medium Term National Development Plan 2019 -2023.

### COTE D'IVOIRE

- Country Report of Cote d'Ivoire stated that Government has rolled out initiatives for the promotion of gender equality, full development and empowerment of women with

the creation of the Cote D'Ivoire Women's Support Fund (FAFC) to enable women access to financial resources.

- According to the status implementation of convergence criteria which the report categorized as, primary and secondary, the primary overall criterion shows a budget balance including grant/nominal GDP ratio which stood at 5.6 percent in 2020. According to the 2018-2022 programme, the target expected 3.7

- Whereas under the secondary category, wage bill/tax revenue ratio is projected to increase to 38.3 percent compared to 37.3 percent in 2020 against a target of 38.6 percent in the 2018-2022 programme.

- Regarding its contribution to Community Levy, the report states that, Cote d'Ivoire is in good standing with payment.

### NIGERIA

- Nigeria's Country Report stated that though the Member State is in arrears of some months in fulfilling its community levy obligations, it is working assiduously towards fulfilling those obligations.

### LIBERIA

- Liberia's Report to the Plenary indicated that total intra-regional trade remained low due to poor transportation and infrastructural challenges as well as cumbersome bureaucracy for registration and certification of products and low-quality goods.

- The Liberian authorities are working on the transition of the Common External Tariff (CET)

to ensure compliance with ECOWAS, and is expected to be fully compliant by end of 2022.

- The Member State is participating and complying with ongoing initiatives aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the Protocol on the free movement of persons, right to residence and establishment. To this extent, the Report showed that the ECOWAS Common Passport has been adopted, visa free movement of community citizens observed, a 90-day stay without residence permit implemented and the National Biometric Identity Card has been rolled out.
- Liberia has continued to implement the National Quality Policy and Quality Infrastructure within the framework of the ECOWAS

Standards Harmonisation Model (ECOSHAM).

- Liberia has fully paid up its contribution to the WAMZ Stabilisation and Cooperation Fund (SCF) and the ACB capital.

#### SENEGAL

- Senegal's Country Report showed that it is fully implementing the provisions of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) and presently working to list Senegalese companies with import-export capacities., which have not yet been approved by the SLE due to their lack of knowledge of this instrument and/or of the procedures for requesting approval.
- Senegal is on very good footing towards completing its local infrastructural projects such as the Regional Express Train, the Rapid Transit Bus

(BRT), the Ila Touba Highway, as work on the Trans Gambia Bridge have been completed and delivered.

- In order to align with the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and the objectives of Senegal's national mechanism, the country has developed its National Program for Agricultural Investment, Food Security and Nutrition (PNIASAN), which was officially launched on February 16, 2017.
- To curb the negative impact of COVID-19, Senegalese Government has set up an Economic and Social Resilience Programme (PRES), for very short-term actions, endowed with response fund called "Force COVID-19" – amounting to CFA francs 1,000 billion or 7% of GDP.

## Speaker Tunis, FCT Minister tour proposed site for new ECOWAS Headquarters'

The Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sidie Tunis, the Hon. 1st Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase, and the Federal Capital Territory Minister, Mallam Muhammad Musa Bello, undertook a tour of the proposed site for the construction of the ECOWAS Headquarters in Abuja.

The proposed site which was provided by the Federal

Government of Nigeria, is a 7 hectares plot, designed to accommodate the Headquarters of the Commission, the Community Court and the Parliament within the same precinct.

At the guided tour, the Rt. Hon. Speaker expressed appreciation for the support of the FCT Minister on the proposed project.

The leader of the Côte d'Ivoire delegation to the Second Ordinary Session and the chair of the Infrastructure Committee in the Parliament,

Hon. Adjaratou Traoré Coulibaly also expressed gratitude to Nigeria over the size of the plot.

The FCT Minister while giving assurance of his Ministry's support noted that when the allocation of the land was made, the payments required were waived as part of Nigeria's support.

The Minister expressed the determination of the Nigerian government to keep the project on track because of its importance to the Community.

## Insurgency hindering free trade in the region- Wase

The First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase has identified insurgency and banditry as factors hampering the progress of the free movement of persons and goods across borders, thereby impeding the eventual realization of the objectives of the AfCFTA agreement.

Wase made this observation while reacting to the 2021 Report on the Status of the Commission presented by the President of the Commission, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou at the Second Ordinary Session of the Parliament.

He noted that the security of the

region has been compromised as a result of the continued insecurity, with its effects rippling across almost every sector of the economy with a clear emphasis on trade.

"The effects of terrorism is being felt in Agricultural production. Some sub-regions have commenced the importation of tomatoes from India, as well as milk from Brazil. If regional integration is to be achieved, we should benefit from each other rather than other continents", Hon. Wase reasoned.

Parliament's First Deputy Speaker also decried the exploitation of the

menace of terrorism by major players in production, who capitalize on the situation to mop up and monopolize the region's



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agricultural produce, resulting in increased food shortages.

He enjoined the ECOWAS Commission to focus on addressing insecurity as the pandemic that it is.

## ECOFEPA renews drive for increased women representation in Parliament

The newly elected executives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Female Parliamentary Association (ECOFEPA), in a renewed drive for increased participation of women in Parliament especially in the National Assemblies of Member States of the Community, has called for the support of the Nigerian Senate.

This call was made during a courtesy visit of the ECOFEPA to the President of the Nigeria Senate, Ahmed Lawan.

During the visit led by 3rd Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Memounatou Ibrahima, and Vice President of ECOFEPA, Hon. Abiodun Olujimi, Hon. Ibrahima told the Senate President of plans by ECOFEPA to host a conference of ECOWAS female Parliamentarians with a view to exploring areas of development and cooperation of women parliamentarians within the sub-region.

She further spoke on moves by ECOFEPA to monitor, support and encourage female representation in parliaments within the ECOWAS region and also embark on projects that have bearing on the girl child.

Ahmed Lawan, pledged support towards, more participation of women in governance. He said, the ongoing review of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution would take into account the need to encourage more representation of women in parliament.

He expressed hope that by the time the constitution review is concluded, provision for affirmative action for better women representation in the National Assembly would be made.

In an earlier engagement, the newly elected Executives of ECOFEPA pledged to put together a binding document for National Assemblies to send more women to the Community Parliament.

This pledge was made after the election of ECOFEPA's new executive which comprises, Hon. Woraye Sarr (Senegal), President-elect, Hon. Biodun Christine Olujimi (Nigeria), 1st Vice-President-elect, Gabriela Alfredo Fernandez (Guinea-Bissau), 2nd Vice-President-elect, Hon.

Moussokoura Chantal Fanny (Cote d' Ivoire), Secretary- General, and Hon. Laadi Ayii Ayamba (Ghana), Treasurer.

Hon. Olujimi expressed dissatisfaction over the dwindling trend of women's participation in the Community Parliament which saw a drop from 25 female MPs in the previous Community Assembly and now 21 in the current fifth Legislature of 115 MPs total.

The Hon. Speaker, Dr. Sidie



Ahmed Lawan with ECOFEPA Exco members.

Mohammed Tunis also received a delegation of ECOFEPA, led by Hon. Olujimi in his office on Friday December 10, 2021.

During the ceremony, the Rt. Hon. Speaker was conferred with the distinguished honor as, "Patron of ECOFEPA" by the newly elected executives. In his acceptance remarks, Rt. Hon. Tunis described himself as a, "he for she" advocate.

# Parliament Swears in New MPs

Following the reorganization of the Parliament of Cote d'Ivoire and the legislative elections that took place in Cabo Verde recently, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Rt. Hon. Dr. Sidie Mohammed Tunis has sworn in new Members of Parliament (MPs) from the two Member-States.

As is customary, the new MPs took the oath of office right after the roll call of Members, during the opening ceremony of the Second Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria.

The newly sworn-in Members



Swearing in of New MPs

from Cote d'Ivoire are; Gnagadjomon Kone, Aka Herve. Whereas those from Cabo Verde are Rosa Lopes Rocha and Isa Felomena Costa, Carlos Alberto dos Santos and Nelson do Rosario from.

In a brief oath-taking ceremony, the Speaker encouraged the

new members to give their best and work for the common good of the people of the region. He urged them to be committed in their legislative assignments. The members were elected from their National Assemblies to form the Parliamentary delegations of their countries in the Community Parliament.

# MPs lament diverse AfCFTA Implementation Hurdles



Creating One African Market

Photocredit: leadership.ng

Some Members of the Parliament have decried the factors militating against the effective implementation of the African

Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), even as they noted that there is a nexus between the agreement and free movement of goods, persons and services.

The MPs unequivocally reacted to the 2021 Report on the State of the Community, presented by the President of the Commission, Dr. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, to The Plenary, at the Second Ordinary Session in Abuja.

The Fourth Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Adja Satu Camara Pinto

(Guinea Bissau) in her reaction, expressed dismay that her country's infrastructural disadvantage would have a debilitating impact on its capacity to thrive through the AfCFTA.

She said: "As a region, we cannot make the most of this opportunity if we do not have the standard infrastructure. Guinea Bissau is weak and has poor roads, compared to other Member-States. I hereby appeal to this esteemed Commission to examine the situation of each country in reference to this;

otherwise, Guinea Bissau stands the risk of being isolated from other nations, thereby unable to realize the free movement of goods and persons, while communications will be all but non-existent”.

In addition, Hon. Camara noted that: “It has therefore become an utmost priority to facilitate initiatives that will ensure the readiness of our trading routes as well as their suitability for cross-border trade. This will enable access to markets and ultimately, regional businesses on the global value-chain.

In her contribution, Hon. Medigal Romarique Medegan Fagia Sedami (Benin) also stressed the need for the reciprocation of open market benefits, if the success of the AfCFTA is to be guaranteed. She also appealed to the Commission to be deliberate in the face of this opportunity to remove bottlenecks and regulate trade across borders within West Africa.

According to her, “There is a need for the Commission to invigorate and unleash the sub-region's economy”.

On his part, Hon. Tapsoba Tibo Jean-Paul (Burkina-Faso) observed that while it was assumed that all African countries had signed the AfCFTA treaty, in actual fact, there are delays in its signing by other African nations, including certain West African Member-States. In his remarks: “Some countries in our region are delaying the signing and ratification of this Act. Until we are unified in our resolve to strengthen and boost the region's economy as well as facilitating access to our individual trading routes, the free movement of goods and persons will not be a reality”.

Honourable Assine Aime (Senegal) also referenced the ECO currency as a very important factor in successfully achieving the free movement of persons and goods under the AfCFTA.

“We are talking about the development of trade and integration within our region. If this trade policy is not well structured and implemented throughout the region, it will frustrate the efforts of the Commission”, the MP opined.

He further explained that lack of a unified currency has led to the harassment of traders at the borders, and this is not in tangent with the objectives of the agreement. He added that the ECO currency is being established for the sole purpose of unifying currencies, strengthening the economy of Member States and establishing West Africa in its right as a financially stable region.

In his own contribution, the First Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon Ahmed Idris Wase (Nigeria) identified insurgency and banditry as hampering the progress of the free movement of persons and goods across borders; thereby impeding the eventual realization of the objectives of the AfCFTA. He stated that, “The effect of terrorism is being felt in agricultural production, some sub-regions have commenced the importation of tomatoes from India as well as milk from Brazil. If regional integration is to be achieved, we should benefit from each other rather than other continents”.

## Re-setting regional agenda on Climate Change

As nations and regions across the globe grapple with challenges associated with climate change or natural disruptions, food insecurity among others, the ECOWAS Community has indicated its readiness to make the World

Global Water Forum a top priority in its regional agenda for 2022. There were indications that issues that would guarantee food security in the sub-region and address environmental challenges will be the focal points for critical

and serious engagements in both legislative and community agenda of the sub-region.

Climate change; natural and man-made phenomenon have profound and overwhelming effects on lives and livelihood

that every receptive government gives serious attention to it. Climate change is real, and the impact on our lives, livelihood and environment are serious and better imagined hence there is the urgent and compelling

values of Member-States, climate change represents a clear, impending danger to both human and regional existence. For instance, the Western agenda on climate change seem to emphasize more on carbon emissions. They tend to forget

economy?

While the West remains irrevocably committed to energy transition to renewable energy, a situation where most countries in Europe are already moving away from fossil fuel, experts are of the opinion that,



West Africa gearing up for Climatic Disruptions

Photocredit: Futurelearn.com

reason for a global, regional and community awareness and remedial actions to mitigate these consequences.

Climate presents a global challenge; climatic crisis which requires global as well as regional and community preparedness, collective initiatives and strategic actions that would not only be effective but sustainable.

Like in the other parts of the world, millions of people are already suffering from what experts describe as catastrophic effects of extreme disasters occasioned by climate change. These include, prolonged drought, especially in sub-Saharan Africa to devastating tropical storms that occasionally sweep across South-East Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Considering the interconnectedness, interdependence and the shared

that Nigeria like some other African countries are heavily dependent on fossil fuels such as huge gas reserves and crude that have great prospects for a foreseeable future in their economy.

In tandem with the ECOWAS Parliament's mandate to not only promote constitutionalism in the sub-region but play an advisory role to ECOWAS Heads of States on matters such as Climate change, there is a compelling imperative for the Parliament to continue to deploy its instrumentality to not only build resilience pertaining to issues on climate change but also protect the regional interest of the larger Continent. For instance, basic questions on energy transition such as; what is the implication of the global or Western interventions for what sustains African or the West African

Africa must engage strategically; move away from the benevolence of the West and resist the tendency to copy and paste whatever intervention that comes from these global engagements.

It is for this reason therefore, that the region must continue to present its response from African comparative perspective; what is the implication for Africa?

Currently, there is a groundswell of informed opinion, particularly across the region that if we toe this line we would be putting West Africa on a trajectory of sustainable development.

Beyond the flagging of climate change as a top issue on the agenda at regional summits or for a, and to keep the climate safe for the sub-region, interventions by ECOWAS Parliament must remain strategic and regional-oriented.



The President of the Nigerian Senate, Ahmed Lawan, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean Claude Kassi Brou, and the President of the ECOWAS Parliament, Sidie Mohamed Tunis (from left to right)



## ECOWAS Commission President Kassi Brou Honored by Parliament

The Bureau, the governing organ of the ECOWAS Parliament has conferred on H.E. Dr. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, the Distinguished Honors Award, in recognition of his outstanding and meritorious service to the West African sub-region. The Speaker of the Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sidie Mohammed Tunis, decorated him with the award as President Kassi Brou counts down to the end of his tenure and his exit from the Commission in February, 2022.

At the conferment ceremony in the course of the 2021 Second Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria, the Rt. Hon. Speaker acknowledged the President's outstanding contributions and support to Parliament.

"I am sure we all know His Excellency, the President of the ECOWAS Commission has just few months and he will be leaving us; he will be leaving the Commission and as a mark of appreciation for the support you have given us over the years, especially this Fifth Legislature, the Bureau of the Parliament has decided to give him an award. In recognition of Your Excellency's outstanding service to the West African Integration and

Cooperation process as well as peace, security and sustainable development within the ECOWAS region, I, Hon. Dr. Sidie Mohammed Tunis, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, present to you, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, this Distinguished Honour and Award, given this 30th day of November, 2021. Congratulations", Speaker Tunis announced.

While Speaker Tunis read the Awardees' citation, the President of Nigeria's upper chamber, the Senate, H.E. Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan presented him with the plaque on behalf of the ECOWAS Parliament.

Jean-Claude Kassi Brou was born in 1953 and obtained a degree in Economics from the National University in Cote d'Ivoire, in 1976 and subsequently bagged a Master's degree in the same field in 1979, an MBA (Finance) in 1980 and Ph.D (Economics) in 1982. He started his professional career as an economist with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and also worked with the World Bank. Before his appointment as President of the Commission, Kassi Brou also served as the Minister of Industries and Mines of Cote d'Ivoire.

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