



SIXTH LEGISLATURE

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DRAFT SPEECH BY RT HONOURABLE

Hadja Mémounatou IBRAHIMA

SPEAKER OF THE ECOWAS PARLIAMENT

- **Rt Honourable Tajudeen ABBAS, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;**
- **Your Excellency Dr. Omar Alieu TOUREY, President of the ECOWAS Commission;**
- **Honourable Justice Edward Amoako-Asante, President of the ECOWAS Court of Justice;**
- **Honourable Yawovi Missiame Amenyo ADJOUROUVI, Minister for Human Rights, Citizenship Education and Relationships with the Institutions of the Togolese Republic;**
- **Distinguished Joao Alage Mamadu FADIA, Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions;**
- **Ms Abira BONFOH, President of the ASAAL Fondation;**
- **Honourable Abira BONFOH,**
- **Ambassadors and Representatives of International Organisations accredited to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and ECOWAS;**
- **ECOWAS Commissioners;**
- **Honourable Members of Parliament;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**

1. As we begin this 2024 Ordinary Session of our Community Parliament, I have the opportunity on this occasion, first and foremost, to give thanks to the Almighty God, Creator and Originator of all things. Out of his unending kindness, he has enabled us to meet at this venue, which is highly symbolic of our commitment to viable and sincere sub-regional integration. Nevertheless, to say the least, this session is taking place in a difficult international context for our entire planet earth. As we have barely emerged from pandemics and epidemics, although not fully, we are still grappling with a number of scourges and challenges, such as poverty, climate change, the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and the conflict in the Middle East, to name but a few.

2. Unfortunately, these problems are compounded by another phenomenon of staggering proportions in our region, namely the upsurge in the threat of terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime, which is costing the lives of our

valiant defence and security forces, as well as thousands of innocent people.

3. This asymmetrical threat weighs heavily on our conscience as Africans, and I would like us to begin this ceremony by observing a minute of silence in memory of all the victims of this senseless violence.

4. Please let us pay tribute to them.

(A minute of silence is observed by participants in the memory of all victims).

**Yours Excellencies,
Honourable Members, dear colleagues;
Distinguished Guests,**

5. I agree that, undoubtedly, that wasn't the best way to welcome you. But as the saying goes, what cannot be cured, must be endured. I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the chamber of the prestigious National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the

temple of Nigerian democracy, that the National Assembly of the host country has kindly made available to us as a temporary venue for our session, due to the on-going renovation of the building of the seat of the ECOWAS Parliament.

6. Distinguished guests, at this juncture, allow me to express my deepest gratitude to His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, for the invaluable support he has always provided to the ECOWAS Parliament in the fulfilment of its mandate.

7. Dear colleagues, I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to fulfil the important duty of expressing our deepest gratitude to the First Deputy Speaker, Honourable Senator Jibrin BARAU, who left no stone unturned to make the facilities of the National Assembly available to us to host this session.

8. We have gathered here to fulfil the tradition that requires parliamentary sessions to begin with a solemn opening.

9. As you can imagine, I am greatly delighted and pleased to be chairing this opening ceremony for the first time since I have been elected the Speaker of this august assembly.

**Yours Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,**

10. On behalf of my fellow Parliamentarians and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you all for honouring this ceremony with your presence.

11. Your invaluable presence in our midst demonstrates how much you hold our Parliament in high esteem and your belief in the process of regional integration.

12. Beyond the members of the ECOWAS Parliament, it is undoubtedly all the citizens of

the Community who are honoured by your show of consideration. Thank you very much for that.

13. I also extend warm greetings to my colleagues who are heading other major Community institutions, such as His Excellency the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the President of the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions, whose presence is evidence, once again, of the solidarity and perfect collaboration among Community institutions.

14. My appreciations also go to the members of the diplomatic community who have come to show us their friendship and support, not forgetting our development partners, representatives of bilateral and multilateral cooperation institutions, for their contribution to the development of our region. On behalf of the beneficiary populations of our Community and the ECOWAS Parliament, I say a big thank you to you all.

15. As for you, dear fellow Parliamentarians, I am overjoyed to see you again at this prestigious place of parliamentary history of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, after we parted only a few weeks ago at the end of the 2024 second extraordinary session held from 20 to 25 May 2024 in Kano State here in Nigeria. At that session, we considered and adopted the fundamental texts, which are key to the functioning of the Community Parliament, namely the Rules of Procedure, the Strategic Plan of the 6th Legislature and the 2024 Activity Plan.

16. You will recall, dear colleagues, that in my inaugural speech on 23 May 2024 in Kano, I made mention of various political, economic and security crises in several Member States of the Community, which the 6th Legislature must urgently help to address.

17. These include the desire expressed by three of our Member States to withdraw from the Community, as well as the growing tensions between the Republics of Benin and Niger, not to

mention other constant concerns in the region, such as terrorism, food insecurity, irregular migration and the adverse effects of climate change.

18. Discussions on these various issues led to the adoption by Parliament of what is known as the "Kano Declaration". Specifically, by means of this declaration, we have resolved, among other things, to:

- set up an Ad hoc mediation committee to initiate and maintain not only dialogue with the authorities of these different countries, but also communication among our various populations,
- conduct field visits to understand and help settle disagreements between the two friendly and sister nations, Benin and Niger.
- encourage the ECOWAS Commission to expedite the implementation of the joint defence strategy to fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

19. Dear fellow Parliamentarians, I want to assure you that, during its last two meetings, the

Bureau of Parliament discussed these recommendations at length, and urgent actions are being taken in collaboration with other ECOWAS institutions to implement them.

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues, distinguished guests,

20. In accordance with the provisions of the Supplementary Act Relating to the Enhancement of its Powers, the ECOWAS Parliament has the following items on the agenda for its first ordinary session:

- Report by the President of the ECOWAS Commission on the Implementation of the Community Work Programme;
- Consideration of draft Community Acts;
- Presentation of country reports by national delegations

21. We look forward to the presentation of the report by the President of the ECOWAS Commission during this session.

22. This report will be followed by interactive sessions with ECOWAS Commissioners on the implementation of the programme of each department.

23. Also, during the session, Parliament will consider and issue an opinion on the draft decision to set up a Special Tribunal for The Gambia and the adoption of the status of Special Tribunal for The Gambia to prosecute serious human rights violations, international and national crimes committed on the territory of The Gambia between 22 July 1994 and 21 January 2017.

24. In addition, each national delegation will present its report to Plenary, highlighting their country's political, economic, social and security situations; the status of implementation of governance instruments and Community protocols as well as issues relating to human rights and women's and youth development.

25. Distinguished guests, as you know, our session is taking place in a regional political atmosphere of elections in several of our Member States. It's worth noting that, this year, the West African region has witnessed several elections, such as the presidential election in Senegal and the legislative and regional elections in my country, Togo. Parliament took part in ECOWAS election observation missions in these two countries.

26. I want to seize this opportunity to pay resounding tribute to His Excellency Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic, for his brilliant success in organising the elections of 29 April 2024, and for the relevant constitutional and institutional reforms rolled out in Togo.

27. In addition, I warmly congratulate His Excellency Bassirou Diomaye FAYE on his brilliant election as President of the Republic of Senegal on 2 April 2024.

28. In these two countries, we witnessed a free, fair and transparent process. This is evidence of the soundness of democracy in our region.
29. Other elections are also in the pipeline before the end of the year, including presidential and legislative elections in Ghana and legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau. It is my wish that all political players in these countries commit to a free, peaceful and transparent electoral process.
30. For us, the quest for peace must be a leitmotiv and a challenge for the implementation of a genuine development plan both at national and regional levels.
31. Our peoples often express their wishes based on facts, having no doubt that they will be taken into consideration. We must all bear in mind that our peoples' right to self-determination requires that we respect their choice, which is the expression of their deepest aspirations. Only then will we be able to contribute to consolidating

democracy, strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Honourable Members, dear colleagues,

32. I would like to conclude my speech by thanking you from the bottom of my heart for your commitment to the responsibilities for which we were elected. I have faith that we will continue working shoulder to shoulder to make ECOWAS an ECOWAS of peoples, where peace, security and prosperity prevail.

33. Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Parliamentarians, it is with these words of hope that I declare open the 2024 First Ordinary Session.

34. May the Almighty God grant ECOWAS long life.

Merci, Thank you, Obrigado.