



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**12th ECOWAS-EU Ministerial Troika Meeting
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 11 October 2007**

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. The twelfth ministerial Troika meeting between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU) was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 11 October 2007 under the Co-Chairs of His Excellency Mr. Djibrill Yipènè Bassolé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso and Chairman of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, and His Excellency Mr. João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, representing the current Chairman of the EU.
2. The ECOWAS Troika further included the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Dr. Charles Y. Brimpong-Yeboah, MP, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Honourable Bagudu Mutle Hirse and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas. Mr. Aougui Niandou, Director of Integration and African Union in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation represented the Republic of Niger. His Excellency Mr. Soumaïla Cisse, President of the UEMOA Commission and His Excellency General Lamine Cissé, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa also attended the meeting as observers.

P R E S S

A. PEACE AND SECURITY

Côte d'Ivoire

3. ECOWAS and the EU reviewed the status of the implementation of the Ouagadougou political agreement signed on 4 March 2007 and welcomed the second meeting of the inter-Ivorian political dialogue monitoring committee held in Ouagadougou on 4 September 2007. They also welcomed President Blaise Compaoré's continued engagement for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.
4. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the ongoing preparations for the Presidential elections and hoped that further progress can be made to allow elections to be held under favourable conditions in early 2008. Both parties reiterated the importance of the voter registration and certification exercise and stressed that the quality of the electoral lists is crucial for fair and transparent elections.
5. In view of the upcoming review of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1765, ECOWAS and the EU strongly called on the International Community to support the exercise by respecting its commitments, and to support the process of implementing the Ouagadougou Political Agreement aimed at facilitating the successful completion of the electoral process in Cote d'Ivoire.

Guinea

6. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the determination of the government of Prime Minister Kouyaté to improve conditions in the country and commended the successful holding of the Partner's Forum in Paris in July 2007. Both parties further welcomed the Government's emphasis on national reconciliation, with the creation of a Commission of Enquiry on the political violence that rocked the country during the February crisis, the provision of compensation for victims and the promotion of social dialogue.
7. Following the recent adoption of new electoral laws, both parties underscored the urgent need to appointment members of the Independent National Electoral Commission in view of effectively preparing the upcoming parliamentary elections. The EU and ECOWAS encouraged the Government and all political actors to accelerate the process of organising the elections. They also reiterated their willingness to take part in monitoring the elections. ECOWAS welcomed the arrangements concluded between the EU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to finance the elections. Within the framework of the Art. 96 Consultations of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU renewed its invitation to ECOWAS to take part in the next mission. ECOWAS accepted the invitation.

8. ECOWAS and the EU encouraged the Government of Guinea to continue improving economic governance to redress public finances. In that regard, they called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support this process with a new programme for Guinea. ECOWAS and the EU also encouraged donors to follow up on their promises to support the emergency programme and the 2007-2010 Poverty Reduction Strategy.
9. Both parties will continue to monitor the security situation in the country and the region at large. ECOWAS and the EU support the reform of the security forces.

Guinea Bissau

10. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the improved political stability in the country since the signing of the stability pact in March 2007 and the increased focus of the Government in implementing its ambitious reform programme. Both parties recognised that this offers a window of opportunity for the international community to support the ongoing reforms. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the conclusions of the third meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau held in New York on 24 September 2007 and the increased commitment expressed by international partners.
11. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the ongoing preparations for legislative elections to be held in March 2008 and reiterated their readiness to observe them. They stressed that drug trafficking constitutes a threat to sub-regional security and the credibility of Guinea Bissau, and encouraged the Government to strengthen the efforts combat it. They expressed support for the Plan of Action and existing plans to improve the justice and penitentiary systems.
12. Both parties encouraged the Government to finalise and execute the Action plan for the implementation of the National Security Strategy. ECOWAS welcomed the increased EU engagement as regards security sector reform in Guinea Bissau and the plans to launch, in addition to existing support measures, an operation on the civilian and military aspects of the reform, including the fight against narcotics. Both parties welcomed the improvements in public finances that have led to increased cooperation of the World Bank and the IMF. ECOWAS and the EU will also continue to co-operate both on the ground and within the framework of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau. Both parties supported the steps taken by ECOWAS and the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau (ICG-GB) to include Guinea Bissau in the group of countries to receive the support of the United Nations Peace Building Commission.

Sahel (Situation in Northern Niger/Northern Mali)

13. ECOWAS and the EU expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in the Northern parts of Mali and Niger. They condemned the kidnappings and the use of land mines, which pose a great risk to the civilian population and constitute obstacle to the security and development of the areas concerned. Both Parties considered that the situation poses a threat to the stability of the region and agreed that ECOWAS and other regional organisations should take it up on their agendas to identify the most appropriate solutions.
14. ECOWAS and the EU reaffirmed their support for the Governments of Niger and Mali and all concerned parties in their efforts to safeguard peace. They hoped that a negotiated solution can be reached in Mali and in Niger on the basis of existing peace agreements, while upholding the unity and territorial integrity of both countries. ECOWAS and the EU emphasised their readiness to support measures to improve the security and the living conditions of the people in the Sahel area.

B. DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION AND ELECTIONS

Nigeria

15. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the determination shown by President Umaru Musa Yar ‘Adua and the Government of Nigeria to address the shortcomings of the April elections and deepen democracy, good governance and the rule of law, and lauded the first decisions taken in that direction. The recently appointed committee charged with the revision of the electoral framework in Nigeria is an important step forward, as is the continued swift hearing given by the competent jurisdictions and authorities concerned, to complaints regarding the April 2007 elections.
16. ECOWAS and the EU were encouraged by the commitment of the Nigerian leadership to resolve the situation in the Niger Delta in a spirit of fairness, justice and cooperation and to tackle poverty throughout the country. Both parties welcomed the Nigerian Government’s plans to call a conference on the Niger Delta in Abuja in November 2007. They also hailed the substantial contributions of Nigeria to peacekeeping missions in Africa and around the world.
17. The EU restated its readiness to engage further dialogue with ECOWAS and Nigeria to support sustainable development and good governance in the country.

Sierra Leone

18. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the peaceful holding of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone on 11 August and 8 September 2007 and congratulated His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma on his election as President of Sierra Leone. These elections were an important step towards the consolidation of peace and democracy in a region that until recently, had suffered from violent conflicts. Both parties congratulated the people of Sierra Leone on an orderly election and the National Electoral Commission, on its capable leadership in their organisation. ECOWAS and EU electoral observation missions on the ground attested that these elections were generally well organised, transparent and peaceful.
19. ECOWAS and the EU will continue to follow closely the post-election situation in the country and expressed hopes that the new Government of Sierra Leone will take necessary and appropriate measures to improve governance and accountability in Sierra Leone. They also looked forward to the implementation of the recommendations of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” and urged increased support to the Human Rights Commission.
20. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the work of the UN Peace Building Commission (PBC) in Sierra Leone and looked forward to a coordinated contribution of the UN Peace Building Fund to the country's post-crisis recovery.

Togo

21. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for 14 October 2007 in Togo and encouraged the Togolese people and authorities to preserve the peaceful atmosphere that has prevailed during the electoral campaign. Electoral observers deployed by both parties report that the electoral process is being conducted in accordance with international standards. The EU praised President Compaoré for his crucial role as a facilitator, and welcomed ECOWAS' contribution to the stability of the electoral process, through its unprecedented deployment of a security observer team in addition to its civilian observer mission.
22. Both parties looked forward to successful elections that will set the basis for true national reconciliation and the peaceful development of Togo and the West Africa region. ECOWAS and the EU adopted a joint political statement on the upcoming legislative elections in Togo.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

23. The EU informed about the first expert meeting on human rights between the EU and the African Union, held in Brussels on 19 September. At this meeting, the EU and the AU representatives agreed to consult regularly on the human rights matters, consider issues of common interest and explore ways to improve cooperation and promote global issues at multilateral fora. They also shared their priorities for the upcoming session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and discussed how to better involve civil society in their common endeavour to promote human rights.
24. Both parties agreed that the HRC should be a key player in the strengthening, the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world. They shared their assessment of the recent sessions of the HRC, and agreed that this body was now entering a more operational phase after having devoted much of its time and energy to the institution building process during the first year of operation.
25. They expressed the view that the decisions taken on institutional aspects have no doubt equipped the HRC with the tools and methods that will allow it to fulfil its mandate responsibly and effectively. Both parties expressed their commitment to continue to cooperate in the framework of the HRC in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation.
26. ECOWAS and the EU discussed the ongoing work of the UN Peace Building Commission (PBC) in Sierra Leone and its possible future work in Guinea Bissau. They agreed that the first year of the work of the PBC has been a success and that the PBC is a framework to strengthen cooperation and dialogue in the field of peace-building. They agreed to further consolidate its role within the UN system, inter alia by supporting the PBC in establishing strategic priorities for stabilizing post-conflict countries, ensuring maximum impact in the field, in further enhancing cooperation, coherence and coordination among all relevant actors, in integrating a gender perspective into all its work, in considering lessons learned and in intensifying dialogue with the Security Council, General Assembly and ECOSOC.
27. ECOWAS and the EU are committed to fully and actively contribute to the work of the Commission and to enhance its effective contribution to a peaceful future to post-conflict societies.

D. ECONOMIC INTEGRATION PROCESS AND THE EPA

28. The two parties restated their commitment and determination to conclude a mutually beneficial EPA, capable of contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.
29. Reviewing the status of the EPA negotiations based on the outcomes of the meeting of the West Africa Ministerial Monitoring Committee (MMC) held in Abidjan on 5 October 2007, ECOWAS restated the observation made by the Ministers that the conditions for concluding the negotiations by 31 December 2007 had not been met. Consequently, the West Africa region requested the European Party to submit to the WTO a request to extend the 2001 waiver.
30. The European Union considers that the request for an extension of the 2001 waiver is not consistent with the commitment to treat developing countries equitably under the trade preferences granted by the EU. Furthermore, the extension of the waiver is not compatible with the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement.
31. However, both Parties invited the Chief Negotiators of the two regions to take all necessary measures to expedite the execution of the pre-conditions for concluding the Agreement, namely the joint definition of support programmes, the formulation of market access schedules and the preparation of the text of the Agreement.

E. MIGRATION

32. Both Parties welcomed the report from the second meeting of the ECOWAS-EU Joint Group on Migration. They stressed the value of regular political dialogue on migration and development in identifying areas for practical cooperation and in facilitating coordination between ECOWAS and the EU in this field.
33. The EU welcomed the Common Approach on migration, recently considered by the directors of political affairs and the ECOWAS Parliament. The Common Approach will be submitted to the forthcoming meeting of the Council of Ministers and the Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government for adoption. Both Parties agreed that the ECOWAS Common Approach, which addresses the issue of migration in all its dimensions, including its relationship with development, will constitute an important basis to continue and deepen the dialogue in the fields involved.

34. Consequently, both Parties agreed to deepen cooperation in the following areas:
- Migration and development;
 - Regular migration;
 - Irregular migration;
 - Strengthening operational cooperation in the area of migration;
 - Migration and the Diaspora;
 - Migration and gender.
35. Detailed work programme will be prepared jointly on the basis of these themes, thereby making it possible to associate key actors and partners in each field with the Joint Group.
36. Both Parties underscored the importance of joint and coordinated work with working groups put in place by ECOWAS for its Action Plan. The two parties stressed the importance of regular dialogues between the ECOWAS Commission and the EU Heads of Mission in Abuja.
37. On the status of implementation of the Action Plan of the Rabat Ministerial Conference, as well as the joint programme of action set up in the political declaration of the EU-Africa ministerial conference on migration and development held in Tripoli in November 2006, the two Parties agreed to include it on the agenda of the next meeting. Both parties welcomed the information gathering made by ECOWAS and the EU to implement the Rabat Action Plan, and invited ECOWAS to establish a permanent monitoring mechanism.
38. In this context, the importance of migration as one of the themes of the Common Strategy for the EU-Africa Summit, to be held in Lisbon in December 2007, was underlined.
39. The two Parties agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group should take place in Brussels in May 2008. In that regard, they expressed their wish to hold joint expert meetings on the themes identified above, in line with the work programme to be put in place, in order to better prepare its next meeting in Brussels.

F. DRUG TRAFFICKING IN THE EU AND WEST AFRICA

40. In recognition of the need for the two organisations to tackle the drug problem through dialogue at a higher political level, ECOWAS and the EU held a first expert meeting on the issue of drugs in Brussels on 6 September 2007. The drug situations in Europe and in West Africa were discussed, with a particular focus on emerging trends of drug trafficking, especially cocaine from Latin America, through West Africa into Europe. Both parties expressed concern about the risks and the threat that drug trafficking represents for the security of the populations of the two regions, and agreed on the need to take measures to fight the circulation and consumption drugs.
41. Ongoing cooperation as well as areas for future cooperation were also addressed. In that regard, the EU and ECOWAS discussed plans to develop comprehensive strategies to combat the increased illicit trafficking of drugs in West Africa. In that regard, the meeting noted that ECOWAS has already drafted a policy, a strategy and an action plan.
42. The European Commission and the ECOWAS Commission will pursue dialogue in order to evaluate the possible ways to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Action Plan. ECOWAS and the EU agreed to continue their dialogue and cooperation in this field, based on the principle of shared responsibility and a multidisciplinary approach.

G. JOINT AFRICA-EU STRATEGY

43. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed progress made in the formulation of a Joint EU-Africa Strategy and a first Plan of Action for the period 2008-2009. In that context, both Institutions commended the initiative taken through the next Ouagadougou Conference and on the theme “Peace and Security in West Africa: the role of the EC-Africa Joint Strategy”, which links region-wide issues like peace and security and the African agenda. ECOWAS and the EU look forward to the holding of the 2nd EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in December 2007.

H. OTHER MATTERS

44. The two parties restated the importance of making further progress towards operationalising the ECOWAS-EU-UNOWA Action Framework for peace and security.