

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



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2. MEMBER STATES:

Benin	Guinea	Niger
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	Nigeria
Cape Verde	Liberia	Senegal
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	Sierra Leone
The Gambia	Mauritania	Togo
Ghana		

In December 1999, Mauritania announced that it would withdraw from ECOWAS as a result of its disagreement with some of the decisions taken at the Summit.

3. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

The idea for a West African community goes back to President William Tubman of Liberia, who made the call in 1964. An agreement was signed between Côte d'Ivoire,

Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in February 1965, but this came to nothing. In April 1972, General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo re-launched the idea, drew up proposals and toured 12 countries, soliciting their plan from July to August 1973. A meeting was then called at Lomé from 10-15 December 1973, which studied a draft treaty. This was further examined at a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra in January 1974 and by a ministerial meeting in Monrovia in January 1975. Finally, 15 West African countries signed the treaty for an Economic Community of West African States (Treaty of Lagos) on 28 May 1975. The protocols launching ECOWAS were signed in Lomé, Togo on 5 November 1976.

In July 1993, a revised ECOWAS Treaty designed to accelerate economic integration and to increase political co-operation, was signed.

ECOWAS has been designated one of the five regional pillars of the African Economic Community (AEC). Together with COMESA, ECCAS, IGAD and SADC, ECOWAS signed the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and RECs in February 1998.

4. OBJECTIVES

ECOWAS aims to promote co-operation and integration in economic, social and cultural activity, ultimately leading to the establishment of an economic and monetary union through the total integration of the national economies of member states. It also aims to raise the living standards of its peoples, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent. ECOWAS integration policies and programmes are influenced by the prevailing economic conditions in its member countries, the need to take the principal provisions of the AEC Treaty into account, and relevant developments on the international scene.

The revised treaty of 1993, which was to extend economic and political co-operation among member states, designates the achievement of a common market and a single currency as economic objectives, while in the political sphere it provides for a West African parliament, an economic and social council and an ECOWAS court of justice to replace the existing Tribunal and enforce Community decisions. The treaty also formally assigned the Community with the responsibility of preventing and settling regional conflicts.

5. STRUCTURE

The Community consists of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the Community Tribunal, the ECOWAS Parliament, the Executive Secretariat and six Specialised Commissions.

5.1 Conference of Heads of State and Government

The Authority of Heads of State and Government of Member States is the supreme institution of the Community and is composed of Heads of State and/or Government of Member States. The Authority is responsible for the general direction and control of the Community and take all measures to ensure its progressive development and the realization of its objectives.

The Authority :

- determines the general policy and major guidelines of the Community, gives directives,
- harmonizes and co-ordinates the economic, scientific, technical, cultural and social policies of Member States;
- oversees the functioning of Community institutions and follow-up implementation of Community objectives;
- prepares and adopts its Rules of Procedure;
- appoints the Executive Secretary in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty;
- appoints on the recommendation of Council, the External Auditors;
- delegates to the Council, where necessary, the authority to take such decisions as stipulated in the Treaty;
- refers where it deems necessary any matter to the Community Court of Justice when it confirms, that a Member State or institution of the Community has failed to honour any of its obligations or an institution of the Community has acted beyond the limits of its authority or has abused the powers conferred on it by the provisions of the Treaty, by a decision of the Authority or a regulation of the Council;
- requests the Community Court of Justice as, and when necessary, to give advisory opinion on any legal questions; and
- exercises any other powers conferred on it under the Treaty.

The Authority meets at least once a year in ordinary session. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of the Authority or at the request of a Member State provided that such a request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The office of the Chairman is held every year by a Member State elected by the Authority.

5.2 Council of Ministers

The Council comprises the Minister in charge of ECOWAS Affairs and any other Minister of each Member State. Council is responsible for the functioning and development of the Community. To this end, unless otherwise provided in the Treaty or a Protocol, Council shall:

- make recommendations to the Authority on any action aimed at attaining the objectives of the Community;
- appoint all statutory appointees other than the Executive Secretary;
- by the powers delegated to it by the Authority, issue directives on matters concerning coordination and harmonization of economic integration policies;
- make recommendations to the Authority on the appointment of the External Auditors;
- prepare and adopt its rules of procedure;
- adopt the Staff Regulations and approve the organizational structure of the institutions of the Community;
- approve the work programmes and budgets of the Community and its institutions;
- request the Community Court of Justice, where necessary, to give advisory opinion on any legal questions;
- carry out all other functions assigned to it. under this Treaty and exercise all powers delegated to it by the Authority.

The Council meets at least twice a year in ordinary session. One of such sessions shall immediately precede the ordinary session of the Authority. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of Council or at the request of a Member State provided that such request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The office of Chairman of Council is held by the Minister responsible for ECOWAS Affairs of the Member State elected as Chairman of the Authority.

5.3 Tribunal

The treaty provides for a Community Tribunal, whose composition and competence are determined by the Conference of Heads of State and Government. The Tribunal interprets the provisions of the treaty and settles disputes between member states that are referred to it.

5.4 Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretary is elected for a four-year term, which may be renewed once only. ECOWAS is undergoing a process of reform, which has seen the post of financial controller being scrapped, while two positions of deputy executive secretaries have been created for economic co-operation and policy harmonisation respectively. The restructuring of the Executive Secretariat was approved at the summit in December 1999.

Executive Secretary: Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambas.

5.5 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security

The ECOWAS Summit of December 1999 agreed on a Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security.

The Mechanism has a Council of Elders, as well as a Security and Mediation Council. The ten members of the latter are the Foreign Ministers of the following states:

Benin	Cote d'Ivoire
The Gambia	Ghana
Guinea	Liberia
Mali (Chair)	Nigeria
Senegal	Togo

5.6 *Specialised Commissions*

The following Technical Commissions are established within the Economic Community Of West African States :

- * Food and Agriculture;
- * Industry, Science and Technology and Energy;
- * Environment and Natural Resources;
- * Transport, Communications and Tourism;
- * Trade, Customs, Taxation, Statistics, Money and Payments
- * Political, Judicial and Legal Affairs, Regional Security and Immigration;
- * Human Resources, Information, Social and Cultural Affairs; and
- * Administration and Finance Commission.

The Authority may, whenever it deems appropriate, restructure the existing Commissions or establish new Commissions. Each commission shall comprise representatives of each Member State. Each Commission may, as it deems necessary, set up subsidiary commissions to assist it in carrying out its work. It shall determine the composition of any such subsidiary commission.

5.7 *Community Court of Justice*

In October 1999, ECOWAS decided to establish a Court of Justice following a two-day meeting of Justice Ministers in Abuja. The court will address complaints from member states and institutions of ECOWAS, as well as issues relating to defaulting nations. The court has a president, chief registrar and seven judges and is a permanent institution. Draft rules of procedure for the Court are being finalised.

5.8 *ECOWAS Parliament*

The ECOWAS Parliament convened in May 2002, with 115 MPs representing all the member states except Cote d'Ivoire. Togo, Liberia, Cape Verde, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Republic of Benin, the Gambia and Sierra Leone have 5 Parliamentarians each; Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal have 6 Parliamentarians each; Cote d'Ivoire is entitled to 7 representatives; Ghana has 8 and Nigeria has 35. Membership is constituted

from the membership of the national parliaments of each member state. Should the member lose his or her seat in the national parliament, they would lose their seats in the regional parliament. The ECOWAS Parliament is situated in Abuja, Nigeria and at present only acts in a consultative and advisory capacity. Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Professor Ali Nouhoum Diallo, has expressed the intention of the Parliament to acquire legislative powers in the future, as well as to institute directly elected representatives.

6. PEACE AND SECURITY-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Because of distressing events in several of its Member States, ECOWAS soon realised that the case of economic development and progress can only be pursued in an environment of peace and stability. It found that it had to involve itself in conflicts in Member States to ensure that an environment conducive to the implementation of its economic programmes was maintained.

Meeting in Lagos on 22 April 1978, ECOWAS Member States had earlier adopted a Protocol Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) which enjoined Member States to “ ... refrain from the threat and use of force or aggression” against one another. Article 5(2) of the PNA stated that “Any dispute which cannot be settled peacefully among Member States shall be referred to a Committee of the Authority. In the event of failure of settlement by the ... Committee the dispute shall finally go to the Authority [i.e. Heads of State].”

A subsequent Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD) was signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 29 May 1981 and became effective five years later. PMAD committed the ECOWAS member states to a collective defence treaty by accepting that armed threat or aggression against one constituted a threat or aggression against the Community and resolved to give mutual aid and assistance for defence. The Protocol provides for a collective response where a member state is a victim of internal armed conflict that is engineered and supported actively from outside, and which is likely to endanger the peace and security of other member states. Both these Protocols have been subsumed as part of the new ECOWAS Mechanism.

During the 1990s ECOWAS activities have increasingly been dominated by its efforts to secure peace in Liberia, in particular through the involvement of ECOMOG (ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group) which was dispatched to Liberia in August 1991. The ECOWAS regional mechanism for conflict resolution provides a framework for regional intervention in political crises in member states with ECOMOG as the adopted regional intervention force.

Subsequent security-related agreements include the ECOWAS Conventions on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and on Extradition signed in Dakar on 29 July 1992 and in Abuja on 6 August 1994, the Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons, adopted by the ECOWAS Heads of

State in Abuja on 30-31 October 1998 and the Programme for the Co-ordination of Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), held in Bamako on 24 March 1999. Meeting in Abuja on 9 July 2001, ECOWAS heads of state and government extended the moratorium for another 3 years.

The ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles in 1991 set out member states' commitment to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This was taken further in December 2001, with declarations on Child Rights and Human Trafficking, and most importantly, the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which addresses root causes of conflict, such as corruption and instability. This is a supplementary protocol to the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, and deals with issues such as free, fair elections, civilian control of the military and unconstitutional changes of government.

Plans for the establishment of a regional criminal investigation and intelligence bureau were considered at meetings of the ECOWAS Police Chiefs on 23 September 2002 and the Interior Ministers on 26 September 2002 as part of efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities.

6.1 ECOMOG

ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) operations started in Liberia to prevent the overthrow of the unpopular government of President Samuel Doe by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor. Doe called on the Community for help. His request would eventually split the Community when the Anglophone countries, led by Nigeria, decided to assist, while the Francophone countries largely opposed the military intervention.

The intervention force that landed in Liberia on 24 August 1990 consisted of troops contributed by Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. Successive fighting, looting and killing was temporarily halted by a number of short-lived peace accords until the fourteenth peace accord was signed in Abuja in August 1996. ECOMOG oversaw the subsequent elections on 19 July 1997 that swept Taylor to power in a landslide victory. The Group departed in February 1998, having earned grudging respect for its role in the latter years.

The barbarity and cruelty seen in the NPFL operations in Liberia were mirrored in those of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under Foday Sankoh in neighbouring Sierra Leone from Liberia. RUF operations started in March 1991. In 1994 the Sierra Leonean and Nigerian governments signed a defence pact and ECOWAS soon extended the mandate of ECOMOG in Liberia to include Sierra Leone, and moved its headquarters from Monrovia to Freetown. A cease-fire between the government and the RUF eventually came into effect on 24 May 1998, followed by negotiations and a peace deal on 7 July 1999. ECOMOG would eventually reinforce its troops to almost 15 000 before the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), start taking over in accordance with the Lomé Accords.

ECOMOG has played a lesser role in Guinea-Bissau where President Vieira called on ECOMOG to intervene and help put down the rebellion in his country in 1998 led by the former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Brigadier Ansumane Mané. The first ceasefire of 26 July 1998 would eventually lead to a peace agreement signed on 1 November in Abuja that called for a 600 man ECOMOG force to police the withdrawal of Guinean and Senegalese soldiers and elections.

The ECOWAS Foreign Ministers recommended, on 3 March 1998 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, that ECOMOG formally become responsible for peacekeeping operations in West Africa and sought to provide a clearer command chain in the light of the often complex relationship between ECOMOG and ECOWAS. The Yamoussoukro decision reflected not only the reality of ECOMOG but served to recognise the dominant role of Nigeria although the decision provided for the broadening of the troop contributions and a rotating Force Commander, as opposed to predominantly Nigerian commanders. Although Nigeria has carried the lion's share of ECOMOG, with a civilian government in power since the end of May 1999, Nigerian President Obasanjo has made it clear that Nigeria could not continue to do so in future.

The ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission meeting in Abidjan from 14-18 August 2002 approved a harmonised training programme for ECOMOG stand-by units, in three training schools in the region. The three schools are: the Peacekeeping School in Zambakro, Cote d'Ivoire, the Kofi Annan International Training Centre in Accra, Ghana, and the National War College in Abuja, Nigeria. They would respectively handle tactical, operational and strategic training programmes. It would become compulsory for each member state to have standby units, to be inspected regularly by the Commission. Plans are also underway to set up two military bases for the storage of common user equipment and other items recovered from past operations. These bases would be established in one coastal country and one landlocked country in the region. Proposals for the financing of ECOMOG peacekeeping deployments include a 0.5% levy on import duties collected in the ECOWAS region.

Since September 2002, a military rebellion in Cote d'Ivoire has drawn ECOWAS into peacekeeping duties in that country. A meeting of the Mediation and Security Council of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security met on 26 October and agreed to the deployment of some 2,396 West African troops to monitor a ceasefire signed on 17 October. So far, Benin, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and The Gambia have pledged troops to the force.

6.2 The ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security

In July 1991, while endorsing the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration of political principle to promote mutual collaboration in defence and security issues. A subsequent extraordinary ECOWAS summit in December 1997 in Togo established a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention,

Management, Resolution and Security. This was followed by the Yamoussoukro meeting of Ministers of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs during March 1998, and the ministerial and experts meeting in Banjul during July 1998. The document was finally accepted and endorsed by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at the Abuja summit in August 1999 and sought to institutionalise structures and processes that would ensure consultation and collective management of regional security issues. In the process the Protocol effectively replaced the ECOWAS Protocols Relating to Non-Aggression (PNA) and Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD).

The Heads of State and Government of Member States, ‘the Authority’ is the highest decision-making body of the Mechanism but, without prejudice, has delegated its powers in terms of Article 7 of the Treaty to the Mediation and Security Council – an innovative approach yet to be copied by other sub-regions. The Mediation and Security Council serves as the equivalent to the UN Security Council at sub-regional level and meets at ambassadorial, ministerial and at Head of State level. Acting on behalf of the Authority of Heads of State it takes decisions on all issues relating to peace and security of the sub-region.

- (a) The Committee of Ambassadors of the nine elected Member States of the Council meet each month to review issues of peace and security.
- (b) The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Internal Affairs and Security meets at least every 3 months “... to review the general political and security situation in the sub-region.”
- (c) The nine-member Heads of State of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council meets at least twice a year and has the authority to make final decisions on the appropriate measures, policies and mandates to be taken with regard to situations under consideration with a two-thirds majority vote of the Members present.

The Council can authorise all forms of intervention, including the decision to deploy political and military missions, inform the UN and the OAU of its decisions, provide and review mandates and terms of reference, appoint force commanders, etc. The Council can therefore, amongst others appoint a Special Representative as Chief of a Mission, appoint a force commander and deploy ECOMOG. Other components of the Mechanism include the Defence and Security Commission, Executive Secretary, Council of Elders and ECOMOG.

The Executive Secretary has the power to initiate fact finding, mediation, facilitation, negotiations and reconciliation actions in the effective prevention and management of conflicts in the sub-region. The office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security supervises the Departments of Political Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs, Defence and Security and the Observation and Monitoring Centre. The Centre is the hub of the Early Warning System that has four Observation and Monitoring Zones within the sub-region. It has recently appointed a director and a programme manager responsible for early warning analysis.

During May 2001 ECOWAS signed a headquarters agreement with Benin to establish an observation zone in Cotonou whose role would be to signal the potential of conflicts in

Benin, Nigeria and Togo. This would be the fourth zone. The others are in Banjul (Gambia), Monrovia (Liberia), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Cotonou (Benin) would be to collect data on potential disputes for transmission to the central ECOWAS observatory in Abuja. The first headquarters agreement was signed with Burkina Faso.

The Mediation and Security Council of the Mechanism was officially launched in Monrovia during May 2000. The meeting, which marked the first ordinary session of the council, followed two special sessions held in Bamako, Mali, and discussed the transfer of power of the different ECOWAS mediation committees to the Council. At the time the members of the Council comprises Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo.

ECOWAS

Economic Community of West African States

