

EcoParl@25

2025 First Ordinary Session ends with renewed call for urgent action against terrorism

The First Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament for 2025 opened on Tuesday in Abuja with a strong call for unity and reflection, as the regional bloc faces the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, while also celebrating its 50th Anniversary.

During the two weeks' session, the Parliament, which is celebrating 25 years of existence, considered critical agenda items, including reports from earlier meetings, the ECOWAS Commission President's update on Community activities, proposed community acts, and country reports from member states delegations. The session also featured interactive sessions with heads of other ECOWAS Institutions. At the opening ceremony Memounatou Ibrahim, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, expressed gratitude to the Government and People of Nigeria, particularly President Tinubu, for their continued support to ECOWASE Institutions and for facilitating the Parliament's temporary move to the National Assembly in 2024. She also acknowledged the presence and contribution of other ECOWAS Institutions, noting the cooperation among regional bodies in advancing integration. Dr Omar Alieu Touray, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, confirmed that following a directive by the Authority of Heads of State and Government in December 2024, an extraordinary Council of Ministers meeting was held in Accra, Ghana, in April to draft a contingency and negotiation plan for the withdrawal. Direct talks with the three countries are set to commence this week. Touray emphasized that ECOWAS remains committed to ensuring that the separation process doesn't harm citizens. On ECOWAS Golden Jubilee celebrations, the ECOWAS Commission head said the celebrations will continue with a major event in Lagos on May 28, where ECOWAS was founded in 1975. Former Nigerian Head of State, one of the founding fathers of ECOWAS, is expected to attend. President of the Nigeria Senate, Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, also joined previous speakers in advocating greater unity, economic reform, and political stability. Speaking under the theme "One Region, One Dream: Advancing the Promise of West Africa", Senator Akpabio urged member states to renew their commitment to regional integration and shared prosperity. He called for urgent action to address currency volatility, inflation, and limited intra-regional

trade. He reiterated the need for a common regional currency and stronger support for industrialization, small and medium enterprises, and infrastructure development.

Other goodwill messages were also delivered by Dr William Towah of ECOWAS Court of Justice, and Joao Alage Mamadu Fadia, the Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions, who both expressed their continued determination to work with the Community Parliament to advance the shared vision.

Parliament approves new rules to enforce discipline, boost participation

During this first Ordinary Session The ECOWAS Parliament has adopted a revised set of internal regulations aimed at improving discipline, accountability, and participation within the regional legislature. The decision was reached during the First Ordinary Session of 2025, which held in Abuja. Presenting the new Rules of Procedure, Honourable Billay G. Tunkara, who chairs the Ad Hoc Committee on Reforms and serves as the Parliament's Fourth Deputy Speaker, outlined several critical changes. Among the highlights is a new rule stipulating that lawmakers who miss one-third of any session without valid reason risk losing their sitting allowances or facing suspension. Other reforms include the promotion of gender and language balance in committee assignments, strict enforcement of a dress code for all members, and a ban on the use of insulting or derogatory remarks towards fellow parliamentarians or Heads of State. Additionally, a minimum quorum of 50 members has been set for any session to commence, while the Speaker is now required to step aside for a Deputy Speaker when contributing to debates to maintain neutrality. The Parliament stated that these reforms are designed to improve order, foster greater participation, and enhance the quality of parliamentary debates going forward.



EBID Presents Progress Report to Parliament, Reaffirms Commitment to Regional Development as ECOWAS Bank disbursed \$2.5bn for 300 projects since inception

Also in a highly engaging interactive session during the 2025 First Ordinary Session in Abuja, the ECOWAS Parliament welcomed MacDonald Saye GOANUE, Director of Research and Strategic Planning, representing the President of the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, to present the Bank's progress and vision for regional integration, economic transformation, and sustainable development. The session highlighted EBID's alignment with ECOWAS Vision 2050, which emphasizes regional intervention, social inclusion, and economic resilience. GOANUE outlined the Bank's strategic investments in infrastructure, energy, health, agriculture, education, and digital transformation. He informed Community parliamentarians that since its inception, the Bank has disbursed over USD 2.5 Billion for more than 300 projects, positioning itself as the financial backbone of the ECOWAS region. "In 2024 alone, the Bank approved 10 new projects worth UA 330. 76 million (USD 439.74 million) and appraised 21 additional projects," he said. Key flagship initiatives of the Bank include the interconnection

development financing is more inclusive. The community parliamentarians took turns to commend the bank for its great contributions to regional development and also sought clarification on specific projects that had been implemented, as well as their sustainability and strategies. They also offered constructive recommendations aimed at improving transparency, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, and ensuring that development financing was more inclusive. The bank currently supports key development projects in all ECOWAS countries, focusing on energy, transport, infrastructure, agriculture, and health, among others, while expanding its footprint and deepening regional integration. During the Session the Reports of the various Joint Delocalized Committee meetings were considered, debated and adopted in plenary. Also as the practice during Ordinary Sessions of the ECOWAS Parliament, Country Reports of Member States were presented by leaders of the various delegations. The Reports were debated and clarifications was conducted by the Speaker before the reports were accepted in plenary.

ECOWAS Auditor calls for rigorous, independent oversight amidst regional challenges

The Auditor General (AG) of ECOWAS, Joao Alage Mamadu Fadia, has called for the need for a rigorous, independent and results-oriented oversight of ECOWAS' institutions in the face of complex regional challenges. AG Fadia made the call, while speaking at the just concluded first ordinary session of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja, Nigeria. According to AG Fadia, the invitation of the regional parliament to the session reflects the recognition of the central role occupied by the Office of the Auditor General in the institutional architecture of our community, and reaffirms their commitment to serve their common mission, as Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions. He commended the collaboration between the regional institutions, which he said has enabled them to effectively conduct in-depth audits within several departments of the regional parliament over the years. This, he said, has resulted in significant improvements in the internal control systems, especially in the area of strengthening governance and transparency. Despite the improvements, AG Fadia detailed that challenges still remain, especially with parliament's information systems, where progress remains modest, and their audits continue to highlight the need for strategic reforms that can ensure greater efficiency and accountability.

"As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of ECOWAS' Region integration, we face a complex global environment marked by rising protectionism, declining international cooperation and declining official development assistance. Furthermore, the recent withdrawal of three Member states from the community poses a major challenge, particularly with revenue mobilisation through the community levy," Auditor General Fadia lamented. In this context, he called for rigorous, independent and result-oriented oversight to become even more crucial, adding that it is a fundamental tool designed to ensure sound management of community resources, improve operational efficiency, preserve institutional integrity and above all, strengthen public confidence in their institutions. Guided by these principles, AG Fadia assured that the Office of the Auditor General remains resolutely committed to carrying out its mission with utmost



In its fifty years of existence, the Community institutions have played a key role in the economic development, regional integration, peace and security of our region. I pay tribute to the founding fathers of ECOWAS for their enlightened vision of building together an integrated and prosperous Economic Community where people live in peace and harmony.

Rt. Hon. Hadja Mémounatou Ibrahima
Speaker of ECOWAS Parliament

of electricity networks between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, solar electricity of 750 community facilities in Benin, and the construction of a vital bridge linking AIBD to Blaise Diagne Airport in Senegal. GOANUE emphasized EBID's role in boosting MSMEs financing, supporting public-private partnerships, especially in agro-processing and manufacturing. "The number of projects benefiting from disbursements increased from 56 in 2023 to 77 in 2024. The annual loan disbursement rate was approximately 20.54% in 2024, slightly down from 21.58% in 2023," He concluded that the partnership between EBID and the ECOWAS Parliament is essential to realizing a stable, prosperous and integrated sub-region. Parliamentarians took turns to commend the Bank for its significant contribution to regional development. They also sought clarification on specific project implementations, and sustainability strategies, as well as offer constructive recommendations aimed at improving transparency, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, and ensuring that

independence, professionalism, and integrity. “We are determined to continue our close collaboration with all ECOWAS institutions to strengthen internal control systems and to improve the economy with efficiency, and with the effectiveness of community interventions,” he told the ECOWAS Parliament. He said this commitment is fully in line with ECOWAS' Vision 2050 as well as the “4×4” Strategic Objectives for the period 2022–2026, as defined by the current leaders. He also assured that they are ready and willing to contribute significantly to the achievement of these strategic objectives by promoting good governance and realizing 'our' shared aspirations for a prosperous and integrated region. He said it is “only by working together that we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for all citizens of the Community,” urging the need for the region to join hands together and strengthen their collective resolve to uphold the fundamental values of transparency, accountability and integrity, all of which form the foundation of strong institutions worthy of the trust of the citizenry. To illustrate this, AG Fadia concluded by recalling the words of the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations: “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”

Parliamentarians raise alarm over surge in terrorism across the sub region

A Nigerian ECOWAS Parliament member, Rep. Zainab Gimba, raised an alarm over the surge in acts of terror and violent extremism across Nigeria, West Africa, and the Sahel. Gimba raised the alarm while moving a motion titled, “Strengthening Regional Security Cooperation in Response to *The Escalating Threat of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel.*” Speaking in one of the Session, the lawmaker noted that the upsurge in terrorism stemmed from the recent withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from ECOWAS. She said, “It is with a deep sense of urgency and commitment to regional peace and stability that I rise under Rule 87 of our Rules of Procedure to address this august House on a matter of grave concern to Nigeria my country, and to West Africa and the Sahel. “Mr Speaker, what concerns me most is not the existence of terrorism and violent extremism alone, it is the rapid escalation of such activities across West Africa, “This is particularly in the wake of the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).” According to the lawmaker, the situation in Northeastern Nigeria is very dire because of its infiltration by Boko Haram, ISWAP and other foreign terrorists like Caucasian combatants who arrived in January. She decried the use of advanced sophisticated weapons and ammunitions (drones, chemical agents, among others) that are capable of penetrating armored vehicles and igniting previously impenetrable metals by the terrorists. Gimba said since March, the terrorists had launched coordinated offensives on communities in Gwoza, Pulka, Buni Gari, Buni Yadi, Alagarno, Damboa, Wajiroko, Sabongari, Gujiba, Wulgo, Rann, Dikwa, Nganzai, Gajibo, Baga, Doron Baga, and Marte. “They have overrun multiple military battalions, seizing weapons and destroying security installations in Buni Gari, Alagarno, Pulka, Wulgo, Rann, Marte, Wajiroko, and Sabon Gari in just 60 days. “I have personally, in the company of my state governor, Prof.



Hon. Abiante Awaji-Inombek (Nigeria)

“Nigeria remains resolute in its conviction that regional solidarity is our greatest strength. The Federal Republic of Nigeria stands ready, shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Member States, to help shape a West Africa that our people not only depend on but are truly proud to call their own.”

Babagana Zulum, visited some of these areas with military protection, and on May 15, five days before the commencement of this very Session, Boko Haram attacked farming communities near Baga. “This resulted in the following casualties: In Dawoshi, 40 farmers were slaughtered; In Malam Karamti, 22 civilians killed; In Dabar Giwa, 15 individuals were executed,” she said. She said that the terrorists carried out the atrocities as punishment for the non-payment of illegal “taxes” which they imposed on the victims. Gimba disclosed that a recently arrested terrorist in Zamfara confirmed that instability in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali facilitated their operations and provided them with direct sources of weaponry. The parliamentarian said the impact of terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounted for about 59 per cent of all fatalities globally. She said the Sahel alone accounted for 19 per cent of all terrorist attacks worldwide and 51 per cent of global terrorism-related deaths in 2024, an increase from 48 per cent in 2023. Gimba, therefore, moved a motion seeking a parliamentary resolution compelling ECOWAS member states to improve the funding of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin. She also moved a motion seeking parliament's resolution for the deployment of rapid-response forces to high-risk zones across West Africa and the Sahel to stop the spread of terrorists to coast. Gimba also called for the strengthening of the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network to anticipate, track and disrupt arms trafficking and insurgent migration patterns to pre-empt the terrorism threat. The lawmaker further prayed for a Resolution compelling member states to provide more support to the ECOWAS Regional Food and Agricultural Agency to enhance its capacity to support and supplement the food security needs of the region. She also moved a motion for a Resolution for Parliament to endorse the dialogue that has been opened with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger with a view to reintegrating them into ECOWAS security frameworks. “I dare say that we already know why and how terrorism and violent extremism is spreading and engulfing West Africa and the Sahel. “It is pursuant to this, Mr Speaker, that I move for the adoption of a multifaceted approach, that: “An urgent Resolution be passed by Parliament to endorse the dialogue that has been opened with the AES States (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger) with a view to reintegrating them into ECOWAS security frameworks,” she said. Gimba said the approach should also include supporting a collaborative security effort for the acceleration and full operationalization of the Accra Initiative. She added it should also include the ECOWAS Standby Force in line with its 2020–2024 action plan to combat terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel.

ECOWAS @



Achievements, challenges and future directions

By Angela Atabo

50 years ago, in May 1975, 15 West African countries came together and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was birthed with the Treaty of Lagos. The vision was bold—to create a strong, integrated regional bloc that would promote economic development, political cooperation, social solidarity, and peace across the subcontinent. Half a century later, ECOWAS stands as both a testament to regional solidarity and a mirror reflecting the complexities of post-colonial Africa. As ECOWAS marks its 50th anniversary, observers say it is time to assess its journey, celebrating achievements, confronting challenges, and mapping a future that serves the people of West Africa. They say the regional bloc has achieved some feats in terms of peace and security using ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), for peacekeeping in stabilizing conflict zones. According to them, ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons has enabled millions of West Africans to travel, trade, and seek work across borders without visas. More so, stakeholders highlight ECOWAS' strides toward economic integration through initiatives like the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and efforts to create a common currency, external tariff among other achievements. Regrettably, analysts say the sub-region has also experienced some road blocks to unity and political stability amid the rise of terrorism and armed insurgency in the Sahel. In recent years, a resurgence of military coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger has challenged ECOWAS's democratic credentials. As ECOWAS clocks 50, the need for reforms and renewal is urgent. President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu recently highlighted several challenges facing ECOWAS to include political instability, economic disparities, and the need for stronger regional integration. Specifically, Tinubu emphasized the threats of unconstitutional rule, violent extremism, and the ongoing struggle to address poverty, lack of access to quality education, and unemployment and noted the need for ECOWAS to refocus on its people, invest in education and innovation, and strengthen its commitment to democracy and good governance. As part of effort to address these challenges; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who have continued to contribute significantly to conflict prevention, peace building, and the overall development agenda of ECOWAS are speaking up. They are of the opinion that the regional bloc was in need of reforms among other things to strengthen the region in all spheres. CSOs like the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Ghana and Nigeria, as well as other stakeholders who have been playing vital roles in ECOWAS, have lent their voices. CDD Senior Fellow, Prof. Jibrin Ibrahim, said that recent developments, including military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea, posed significant challenges to the bloc's unity. Ibrahim said that although ECOWAS had been instrumental in deepening democracy in the region; yet, the emergence of unconstitutional regimes threatened the unity and progress it had achieved. “We are facing a major crisis, especially following the emergence of coup d'état in the region, specifically in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea. “This is a huge challenge which eventually

led to the emergence of a different organization for the Sahelian countries. “We feel that we must take the long view and that long view means, first and foremost to remain on the path of democratic consolidation for West Africa.”

Ibrahim said there was need to continue to talk to the Sahelians countries that left democracy to see the value of democracy in the medium term and on the basis of that rescinded



their decision. He explained that one of ECOWAS's core reasons for existence was promoting regional integration and the Sahelian countries that opted out have no access to the sea. He said that the inability of many ECOWAS member states to generate sustainable employment, particularly for the youths was fueling disillusionment and instability. Ibrahim said there was need to deepen the democracy of the region through various reforms. "ECOWAS has been good for West Africa and West Africa has been good for ECOWAS. "It has been a very positive force for West Africa and we do not want ECOWAS to disintegrate; we feel that we must remain on the path of democratic consolidation for West Africa," he said. In his opinion, the Director of CDD West Africa, Dr Dauda Garuba, said ECOWAS was still serving the needs of West Africa in spite of the challenges although more needs to be done. "We need to redefine the treaties and protocols; we also need to create a situation where democracy will continue to flourish in this region for prosperity. "This will lead to full regional integration and also achieve what we call the developmental regionalism that is a dream of our time," he said Stressing the need for reforms, the Project Coordinator of WADEMOS, Paul Osei-Kuffour, said the challenges faced by the regional bloc had made it imperative for innovative reforms. "Indeed, the need for ECOWAS is even more demanding to ensure a coordinated and harmonised response, cooperation and solidarity in countering cross-border security threats fuelling instability and roll back deteriorating democratic norms and governance in the region," he said. He commended ECOWAS for being reconciliatory and exhibiting statesmanship with its position and response to the Alliance of Sahel State (AES) countries following the Jan 29th deadline, which contributed to mitigating public anxiety and apprehension at the time. Osei-Kuffour called on AES to prioritise its engagement with ECOWAS within the transition period, particularly on matters of security and trade in the wider interest of cooperation and the stability of West Africa. The Chairman of the CDD Board, John Odah, called on civil society organisations to critically evaluate the bloc's successes and shortcomings and to actively support the vision of regional integration. "ECOWAS was established to integrate 15 sub-Saharan African countries socially, economically, culturally, and politically, so it imperative for civil society to ensure that the dream of ECOWAS integration is not aborted. "Democracy in West Africa deepens when democracy in the individual countries in West Africa deepens; we have had some challenges in some of our West African countries where the democratic regime has encountered significant challenges. "However, we feel it is important for all of us as citizens of our own countries to try to engage political actors to remain on the path of democracy and that by deepening democracy at the country level, we can deepen democracy at the regional level," he said. The WADEMOS Advocacy officer, Austin Aigbe, said there had been democratic backsliding in the West African region that if not addressed could lead to more coups. "We have come to know that disintegration is not an option because of the huge opportunity that the ECOWAS bloc provides. "As a West African citizen you can travel around the region without passport; that is an advantage that ECOWAS brings to the table but however with the exit of some countries, it reduces that number. "This is weird for us so we need to get them back. "There is also a challenge that needs attention, this is with the countries that extend their tenure and change their constitution; we call it constitutional coup." According to Aigbe, if military coups are criticised, then civilian coup of tenure elongation should also be condemned. He said there was need to continue with the ideology of ECOWAS but by rethinking reforms to

properly position it as a stronger institution, the pride of Africa. "The democratic backsliding must be tackled because we do not want ECOWAS to disintegrate especially because of its free movement, beyond that, there is need to enforce the ECOWAS protocol of good governance and democracy," he said. For ECOWAS to survive and be strengthened going forward, experts advise that it rebuilds trust and democratic norms by revisiting governance protocols and strengthening democratic institutions.

ECOWAS @ 50; Leaders reflects, recommit to regional peace, security

50 years after its founding, leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) converged on Lagos for a historic celebration, one that reflected on the past and sought to chart a bold, unified path for the future. Hosted by Nigeria, the Golden Jubilee ceremony held under the theme "Stronger Together for a Brighter Future" brought together current and former Heads of State, diplomats, development partners, and dignitaries from across the sub-region. In his address, Nigeria's President and Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, emphasized the urgency of moving from rhetoric to action. He called for a renewed commitment to unity and economic integration, acknowledging that member states have fallen short in implementing key policies. "ECOWAS must be more than a vision," President Tinubu said. "It must be a living reality. Under my leadership, we will confront our challenges head-on and ensure our actions match our aspirations." The President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Omar Aliou Touray, highlighted key milestones over the past five decades. These include the free movement of people, the creation of a regional electricity market, progress toward a single currency, and peacekeeping efforts across the region. "We have linked our capitals, opened borders, promoted intra-regional trade, and laid the foundation for a single currency," Touray noted. "We have also stood firm in times of crises—be it pandemics, political instability, or natural disasters. ECOWAS remains the most integrated Regional Economic Community on the continent."

In a poignant moment, former Nigerian Head of State and one of ECOWAS' founding fathers, General Yakubu Gowon, reflected on the ideals that led to the signing of the 1975 Treaty of Lagos. He expressed pride in the bloc's resilience and reiterated the need for democratic governance across all member states. "To the new generation of West Africans: you are the stewards of the next fifty years," Gowon said. "Build bridges, not walls. Uphold democracy, transparency, and the enduring spirit of Pan-Africanism." Representing the African Union Commission Chairperson, Deputy Chair Selma Haddadi pledged continued support to ECOWAS, affirming the AU's belief in Africa's collective future. "We walk this path with you — not behind, not ahead, but beside you," she said. "As long as ECOWAS thrives, Africa thrives." Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, described the next fifty years as an opportunity for an economic boom. He urged member states to embrace multilateralism and leverage the bloc's scale to address modern-day threats — from climate change and artificial intelligence to terrorism and organized crime. "The need for institutions like ECOWAS has never been more urgent," he stressed. "The 50th anniversary is not just a celebration of the past but a recommitment to a common future." While recent challenges — including the withdrawal of three member states have tested the bloc's unity, the atmosphere in Lagos remained hopeful. Leaders voiced confidence in ECOWAS' ability to adapt and continue its role as a pillar of regional integration, peace, and progress.