

ECOWAS Parliament Reaffirms Commitment to Advancing Digital Transformation in West Africa's Education Sector.

The ECOWAS Parliament has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing digital transformation in West Africa's education sector, declaring education technology and innovation as essential tools for shaping the region's future. Speaking at the meeting of the Joint committee: committee on Education, Science and Culture, Committee on Health, Committee on Telecommunications and information technology, themed "Prioritizing education technology and innovation in the ECOWAS region on

The Speaker stressed that technology in education should not come at the cost of human connection. She said the outcomes of the meeting would guide the region toward concrete strategies for digital learning and inclusive growth. She said, "We must ask: what future awaits the teaching profession when artificial intelligence supplants it? How do we prevent dehumanizing education?" "We must build a West Africa where every child has the opportunity to learn, to thrive, and to contribute to the prosperity of our beloved community."



Monday in Dakar, Senegal, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Hadja Memounatou Ibrahima, said the region must embrace new models of learning to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Represented by the 2nd Deputy Speaker, Adjaratou Tralee New Coulibaly, the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament recalled that ECOWAS had taken proactive steps since 2003, when the Protocol AP3103 on Education and Training was adopted in Dakar to harmonise educational systems and promote excellence across member states. She said, "ECOWAS, with its young and dynamic population, rich in diverse cultures and endowed with growing economies, finds itself at a crossroads in the field of education. Traditional educational models, though fundamental, are increasingly being questioned."

"Two decades after the adoption of this protocol, we note significant progress. But we must also acknowledge lingering challenges such as poor infrastructure, unequal access to digital tools, and slow adoption by some member states." Citing former South African President Thabo Mbeki, she added, "If Africa wants to take part in the global knowledge economy, it must allow every child to access information technologies from school."

Also speaking at the event, the Speaker of Senegal's National Assembly, El Malick Ndiaye, represented by his deputy, Ismaila Diallo, called for a unified response to digital transformation. He warned against marginalization, calling on leaders to support innovations that build inclusive societies. He noted that Africa's tech scene was fast expanding. "We must reinforce the core components of learning so that we can build a non-marginalized society." "More than 1,000 startups are active in Africa, with over \$3.4 billion raised in 2020 alone. This dynamism calls

for bold, ambitious, and unified projects in education." Minority Whip and Vice Chairman of ECOWAS Parliament's Health Standing Committee, Senator Osita Ngwu, described the meeting as a timely platform to reflect on the region's educational growth. He stated that while Nigeria is ahead in many areas, there is always room for learning and improvement. He said, "The theme of this particular meeting is very important because the world is growing technologically. We have to stay in touch to be sure we're not left behind. "This is going to help us understand where we are, where we are supposed to be, and what we can learn from others." Speaking about artificial intelligence, Ngwu said the country must continue evaluating its laws to keep up. He said, "AI has both positives and negatives. We will continue to be dynamic and change as time goes on. "We mean business. Everything we do is to ensure that Nigeria is not left behind. I ask our people to continue to support us as we align with global standards in technology and innovation." The meeting produced recommendations for adoption across ECOWAS member states.

ECOWAS, AU reaffirm commitment to breaking trade, economic growth barriers

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), have reaffirmed their commitment to breaking barriers to Africa's economic growth and international trade. They made the commitment when Mrs Nardos Bekele-Thomas, AUDA-NEPAD's Chief Executive Officer, paid a working visit to Dr Omar Touray, ECOWAS Commission's President, in Abuja. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that AUDA-NEPAD is the AU's technical and development agency, which plays a crucial role in accelerating Africa's 50-year development framework's implementation called Agenda 2063. The African Union's 50-year vision, otherwise known as

"The Africa We Want," aims for a prosperous Africa driven by its own citizens and globally competitive. The duo emphasized the need to strengthen AUDA-NEPAD-ECOWAS collaboration, particularly by supporting regional economic growth, international trade and regional agencies like the West African Health Organization (WAHO), among others. Touray reaffirmed ECOWAS' support for AUDA-NEPAD and expressed commitment to joint priorities, especially in preparation for the 2025 Spain-Africa Summit. He emphasized that ECOWAS' participation was guided by a delivery-focused approach, with a priority on economic growth and overcoming barriers to regional and international trade. Speaking earlier, Bekele-Thomas introduced the Team Africa AUDA-

NEPAD's platform for implementing Agenda 2063, as the "AU's 50-year Vision for The Africa We Want." She noted that while the first Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2014–2023) achieved some progress, critical gaps remained in areas such as economic transformation and institutional governance. According to her, the second 10-year implementation plan aims to accelerate progress with greater ambition. NAN also reports that NEPAD (initially called New Partnership for Africa's Development) was established in July 2001 by AU Heads of State and Government for Africa's renewal and accelerated economic development. Its initial vision was to eradicate poverty, foster sustainable economic growth, promote regional and continental integration, and halt the marginalization of Africa in global processes. In 2010, NEPAD's Secretariat was transformed into the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency to better respond to the evolving demands and complexities of Africa.

It was subsequently transformed into AUDA-NEPAD as a planning and coordination agency in June 2018 at the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government. AUDA-NEPAD is the AU Agenda 2063 key implementing arm for development strategy, focusing on incubating high-impact projects, enhancing knowledge sharing, driving socio-economic transformation through industrialization and people-centered innovation.

AWALCO Launches News Channel to Amplify West African Voices

The Association of West African Legislative Correspondents (AWALCO) has officially launched its news channel, marking an important step in the organization's mission to promote in-depth coverage of West African affairs. This development is expected to enhance the organization's ability to tell the stories that matter most to West Africans, promoting greater understanding and cooperation among nations in the region. AWALCO News, the online news medium, aims to cover the entire African continent and beyond, with a special focus on West African countries. The channel will provide comprehensive coverage of the activities of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including the Parliamentary, Judiciary, and Executive arms of the sub-regional body. This will enable the public to stay informed about the decisions and actions of ECOWAS and its impact on the region. According to AWALCO President Innocent Odoh, the news channel will offer members of the

association a platform to showcase the rich socio-cultural and economic heritage of the region.

AWALCO comprises journalists from across the 15 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone. It provides a unique perspective on West African issues. This diversity of perspectives will enable AWALCO News to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the region. The launch of AWALCO News is an important development for the organization and for the region. With its team of experienced journalists and correspondents, AWALCO News is poised to become a leading source of news and information on West African affairs.

ECOWAS Parliament urges 30% National Budget Allocation to Education, call for regional Ed Tech revolution.

The Chairman of the ECOWAS Parliament Committee on Health and Member of Parliament from Cabo Verde, Dr. Orlando Pereira Dia, has called on West African countries to allocate at least 30% of their national budgets to education, stating that such investment is essential for boosting local production and reducing dependence on developed nations. According to a statement, Dr. Dia told journalists at the just concluded meeting of the Joint Committee on Education, Science and Culture, and Communication in Dakar, Senegal, that the role of both national and regional parliaments is to

importing finished goods undermines the region's development. "So far, what have we done? We allow developed countries to come here, take our natural resources, process them, and sell them back to us. We must do the opposite. "Instead of exporting crude oil, we should extract, refine, and export finished petroleum products. If we produce cocoa, we must also produce chocolate. We must reverse the current trend."

Also speaking at the session, former ECOWAS Parliamentarian Mr. Ibrahim Diouf called for harmonized

education policies across member states, particularly in the area of EdTech. He urged the ECOWAS Parliament to harmonize teacher training and school curricula, support research and innovation, promote collaboration among reform stakeholders, and implement regional corporate social responsibility strategies.



champion innovation and technology through education. Dr. Dia stressed the need for ECOWAS countries to integrate innovation, information technology, and artificial intelligence into their education systems as a foundation for sustainable development. He explained that prioritizing educational technology (EdTech) would enable West Africa to become more self-sufficient by transforming local raw materials into finished products, thereby creating jobs and wealth. "The role of Parliament is to promote technology in education," Dr. Dia said. "I had to speak today about the role of Parliament both ECOWAS and national in advancing the education sector, technology, and innovation, which are crucial for the economic and social development of our countries."

He added, "We must increase investment in education so that our countries allocate at least 30% of their national budgets to the education sector. This will allow proper integration of information technology and innovation into school curricula from primary to university levels." "Investing in education, technology, and innovation will enable us to industrialize our sub-region, transform our products, produce more, create wealth, and reduce dependency on external economies." Dr. Dia warned that the prevailing practice of exporting raw materials and

He also stressed the importance of strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Diouf noted that while the use of ICT in schools is increasing, its actual impact remains difficult to measure due to poor planning, inadequate infrastructure, and limited internet access. "The challenge lies in evolving toward a regional education system that integrates ICT, awards standardized diplomas, and adapts to the socio-economic realities of ECOWAS," he said. "Even though ICT adoption in education is growing, its effectiveness remains uncertain due to device malfunctions, lack of strategic planning, resource shortages, and an inability to accurately quantify its real impact." He concluded by urging educators to use digital tools strictly for academic purposes. "We call on teachers using ICT in our schools to ensure it is solely for educational use. ICTs are only tools. Therefore, we must rethink how they are integrated into our education systems by providing the necessary human and material resources to ensure sustainable EdTech development," Diouf said.