

64th Ordinary Session of ECOWAS

We must prioritize good governance to end coups ---Tinubu



President Bola Tinubu has enjoined West African leaders to prioritize good governance and collective prosperity as an essential tool to prevent authoritarian takeovers of power and unconstitutional changes of government in the region. Tinubu, who is the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, identified good governance as a key catalyst to secure popular support through the socio-economic transformation and development of West Africa. The president said this while addressing the high-powered regional gathering at the 64th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government that held in Abuja, December 10, 2023. He said: "The delivery of good governance is not just a fundamental commitment; it is also an avenue to address the concerns of our citizens, to improve their quality of life, and create a stable environment conducive to the achievement of sustainable development. "By providing good governance that tackles the challenges of poverty, inequality and other concerns of the people, we would have succeeded in addressing some of the root causes of military interventions in civilian processes in our region." Recounting decisions taken by West African leaders to further strengthen the region's democratic achievements and uphold the right of the people to elect the leaders of their choice, President Tinubu said the bloc has outlined specific measures to be taken against any member state opting for an unconstitutional change of government.

"While the imposition of punitive sanctions may pose challenges, it is important to underscore that the struggle to protect the fundamental liberties of our Community's

Citizens must be upheld and respected. "To this end, I would like to reiterate the imperative of re-engaging with the countries under military rule on the basis of realistic and short transition plans that can deliver democracy and good governance to the innocent populations in those countries. "On our part, we should be prepared to provide them with technical and material support, to ensure the achievement of these strategic goals," Tinubu was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his spokesman, Ajuri Ngelale. President Tinubu also used the occasion to applaud President George Weah of Liberia for conceding victory and congratulating his opponent in the presidential election held recently in the country. He also acknowledged the presence of former President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, whom he said in 2015 displayed a similar commitment to democratic ideals after losing his re-election to the opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. On the recent disturbances in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, the ECOWAS Chairman asked fellow leaders to pay attention to protecting democracy, reiterating ECOWAS' zero tolerance to unconstitutional changes of government. Tinubu said: "I urge all of us to stand strong and be highly committed in the face of any challenge in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. "The message must go down clearly that we support a democratically elected government, not an unconstitutional exercise. "The re-elected president of Sierra Leone is present here. We are saying loud and clear that we are with you. "Without let or hindrance, democracy will win, if we fight for it, and we will definitely fight for democracy."

Nigeria, others seek support for regional security

Nigeria is pushing for the enhancement of regional security to guarantee peace and economic growth in West Africa. Nigeria's position is contained in its Country Report presented to the 2023 second Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja. It harps on the need for member countries to work together in addressing security challenges through various approaches. Hon Linda Ikpeazu who presented the report said Nigeria would want to see the harmonisation of the regional security agenda geared towards mutually linked security goals. "Given the transnational nature of the threats, non-military peace efforts would take priority over an overly militarised approach to security. "A military approach has had the unintended effect of protracted armed conflicts across West Africa. "Given Chad's proximity to Sudan, ECOWAS under Nigeria's leadership will take on an active role in finding a solution to the crisis in Sudan. "Which emphasizes President Bola Tinubu's July meeting with leaders of Niger, Guinea-Bissau and Benin to discuss the security challenges in the region at the Nigerian nation's capital. "A key element of Tinubu's likely ECOWAS agenda is the prioritizing of security. "Tinubu said in his speech that, without a peaceful environment, progress and development in the region will continue to remain elusive," she said.

Other countries like Cape Verde, Senegal, Ivory Coast and the Gambia, also presented their countries' reports with key attention on regional security. Cape Verde expressed worries that the country is located at a crossroads of routes normally used by transnational organized criminals. "It has numerous shelters on all the islands, which have been exploited with some intensity in the relatively recent past by drug traffickers. "However, the state has invested heavily in securing its borders. "Also, by relying on international cooperation, it has been determined and firm in combating the phenomenon of drug trafficking, and

has been successful in doing so. "With regards to internal security and organized crime, the state has adopted a series of measures based on the principle of zero tolerance of crime," it added. Senegal said though it has enjoyed political stability, it is located in a sub-regional environment characterized by instability and security challenges.

"The ranking of the country on the World Bank's political stability and absence of Violence/Terrorism Index improved from -0.28 in 2011 to -0.17 in 2021, on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5. "However, in terms of security, there are still pockets of hostilities around the borders with Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Gambia in the Casamance region," it stated. The Gambian report, on the other hand, indicated that the country has experienced relative calmness and peace, which enabled it to record major successes within the security sector including the Security Sector Reform. It stated that the reform was centred on conducting a series of trainings for the security sector particularly the Gambia Police Force, Immigration, Drug Law Enforcement Agency, and Prison Service. "All these efforts are geared towards guaranteeing the protection of human rights and non-recurrence of the violation of fundamental human rights by security forces." In another report, the International Academy for Counter-Terrorism (AILCT) has trained security and judicial personnel across countries in the fight against terrorism and the prevention of radicalization. "AILCT offers three types of training; a unit training camp, a management training school and a research institute. "To date, almost 1,000 trainees have been trained at the academy, including soldiers, gendarmes, police officers and judges from 26 African countries." All the reports were adopted during the session presided by the Speaker, Sidie Tunis.

IOM Tasks ECOWAS Parliament On Enact Laws For Effective Migration Management

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has tasked the ECOWAS Parliament on the need to enact laws and policies to address the challenges and harness the benefits of migration in West Africa. This call came during a joint meeting between IOM and the ECOWAS Parliament at the recently concluded Second Session of the Parliament which ended on the 15th of December. During the meeting, IOM highlighted the complex nature of migration in the region, with 9.8 million international migrants residing in West and Central Africa. The majority of these migrants are based in Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria, with significant populations also present in Niger and Mali. IOM noted that 83% of all international migrants within the ECOWAS region originate from West African countries. This underscores the importance of regional cooperation in addressing migration issues. Furthermore, the meeting discussed the challenges faced by migrants in West Africa, including climate change, insecurity, insurgency, terrorism, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate social security systems. Despite these challenges, IOM emphasised the potential of migration to contribute to the

development of West Africa. Migrants can send remittances back home, which can stimulate local economies. They can also bring new skills and knowledge to their countries of origin and promote cultural exchange.

In response to these challenges and opportunities, IOM called on the ECOWAS Parliament to play a key role in enacting laws and policies that support effective migration management. This includes: Protecting the rights of all migrants: Regardless of their legal status, migrants should have access to basic services and be protected from exploitation and abuse.

Addressing the root causes of migration: Investing in education, job creation, and climate change mitigation can help to reduce the number of people forced to leave their homes. Facilitating safe and regular migration: This includes promoting legal pathways for migration and ensuring that migration processes are transparent and efficient.

Promoting orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration: This requires cooperation between countries of origin, transit, and destination to ensure

that migration is managed in a way that benefits all parties involved. The meeting between IOM and the ECOWAS Parliament marks a significant step towards strengthening regional cooperation on migration management. By working together, governments, international organisations, and civil society can ensure that migration is a positive force for development in West Africa.



WACSOFF calls on ECOWAS to relax sanctions against Niger

The West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF) has called for the relief of sanctions against the people of Niger. In a press statement released by the organization at the wake of the 64th meeting of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of States and Government which held in Abuja the Federal Capital of Nigeria, the sanctions which has led to the cutting of electricity from Nigeria to Niger has deprived the country of more than 50 percent of its electricity supply thus destabilizing the proper functioning of hospitals and basic services and inevitably leading to death of children and poor citizens while also lamenting on the tons of food and pharmaceuticals products that have been blocked at the border between Benin and Niger as a result of the sanctions. These sanctions according to the press release have collectively and disproportionately punished the civil population of Niger without any discernment.

While reaffirming its deepest concerns regarding the too many unresolved problems that plagued the region and which has negatively affected the lives of its citizens, the

organization frowns at the inequitable exploitation of natural resources that are not locally processed and do not benefit the citizens of the country coupled with well the violent extremism, terrorism and consequences' of climate change that have ravaged the country not to mention the questionable condition of women and children. The Organisation therefore called on the ECOWAS Authority to show a human face by reducing the sanctions in order not to continue to worsen the already precarious socio-economic situation of the citizens. WACSOFF also called on the government of the Republic of Niger to maintain the canal and gesture of dialogue with all partners with a view to a peaceful settlement.

The Forum also used the opportunity to call on ECOWAS to expedite action on the process of review of the 2001 additional protocol on democracy and good governance as decided by the Extra- Ordinary Summit of Heads of State on September 16,2021 in Accra, Ghana to include among others limiting Presidential mandate to two terms.



FoFA tasks ECOWAS to address environmental degradation, food insecurity

The Friends of the Earth Africa (FoFA), has urged the ECOWAS Parliament to adopt legislations to stop the massive deforestation and pollution in the region. The NGO also urged the parliament to develop regional-wide policies to stop the expulsion of communities by companies setting up industrial plantations, the destruction of local food systems, and land grabbing. The appeal was made by a seven-man delegation of FoFA, who visited the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja during the recently concluded 2nd Ordinary Session. Ms Rita Uwaka, FoFA's Coordinator, Forest and Biodiversity Programme, said that the regional body should also take measures to end the harassment of environmental rights activists, violations of workers' rights, and gender-based violence. "We call on the ECOWAS Parliament, through the International Development Bank, and the relevant committees of the ECOWAS Parliament, to examine the role of financial institutions. "Companies and investors, both national and regional, conducting activities that lead to deforestation, destruction of forest ecosystems and human rights violations.

"Develop regional-wide policies for international financial institutions, development banks and portfolio investors to stop financing agricultural commodity expansion projects at the expense of communities and the environment. "Instead, policies and a financing system should be put in place that is supportive of people-centered solutions, such as community forest management and agro-ecology, which respect and protect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities." She added that the parliament should "ensure that any economic partnership agreement is respectful of the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples, in particular the right to self-determination and the right to prior. "Free and informed consent, as well as the protection and restoration of the environment. Reject pseudo-solutions such

as voluntary certification systems, carbon trading and carbon offsetting. "Also green solutions to the climate and biodiversity crisis that commodity nature, mask bad practices and fossil fuel emissions, condone deforestation and violate human rights". Uwaka added that there was need to adopt policies that have zero-tolerance to the criminalisation and harassment of human rights defenders engaged in environmental protection. She said appropriate legislation should be enacted to allow activists and affected communities to seek justice. In her contribution. Mariam Bassey, Coordinator Food Sovereignty Programme, FoFA, said that the Friends of the Earth International (FoFI), has offices in 74 countries around the world.

She added that it also has nine national groups in Ghana, Liberia, Togo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. "Our main thematic programmes are, forests and biodiversity, food sovereignty, climate justice and energy, economic justice and resistance to neo-liberalism, as well as two inter- dependent areas, gender justice and international solidarity systems," she added. Richard Sam, the Regional Programme Officer for FoFA from Liberia, urged ECOWAS to promote regional policies that establish a moratorium on the expansion of industrial monocultures. "Also, to retreat from trade or investment agreements that give companies the power to influence legislation by granting them special rights and provisions that harm the forest and the people," Sam said. Others who spoke on the issues were Wisdom Koffi from Ghana, and Gladys Uzoigwe from Nigeria. The 1st Deputy Speaker of the parliament, Ahmed Wase, appreciated the delegation for the enriching presentation, which highlighted the enormous environmental devastation faced by the region. He assured that the parliament would take appropriate steps to enact policies and laws that are friendly to the environment.



ECOWAS Parliament Second Ordinary ends in Abuja

The 2023 Second Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament has ended in Abuja, Nigeria, marking the culmination of three weeks of intense debate, collaboration, and reflection. The session, held under the theme "Building a Resilient and Sustainable ECOWAS Community in a Challenging Global Environment," saw Members of Parliament tackle crucial issues affecting the region, while showcasing regional solidarity and a commitment to progress. The session kicked off with a call for stronger regional unity and democratic

Country Reports were presented by all Member state and this facilitated an exchange of information and allowed the Parliament to assess the implementation of Community texts and programs across member states. This transparency is crucial for ensuring accountability and driving collective progress. During the interactive workshops Members delved into crucial topics like international migration, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and domestic revenue mobilization. These



consolidation, echoing the aspirations of the entire ECOWAS community. The Administration and Finance Committee presented a draft consolidated Community budget for 2024, prioritizing key areas while ensuring responsible fiscal management. Notably, the Community Parliament's budget received a modest increase, reflecting its growing role in regional governance. Ten critical referrals kept Members engaged during committee meetings, ranging from combating wildlife trafficking to establishing a regional electricity market fee. These discussions aimed to translate policy aspirations into concrete action plans. The President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Omar Touray, delivered a hopeful report, highlighting the region's resilience amidst political, security, and economic challenges. A significant announcement was the pledge of \$6.7 million in support for Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, the countries most affected by terrorism.

workshops fostered knowledge sharing and the development of innovative solutions for the region's challenges. In view of the above, the Parliament interfaced with Organisations such as International Organisation for Migration (IOM), West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF); Friends of the Earth (FoEA). The 2023 Second Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament served as a powerful reminder of the region's potential for resilience, collaboration, and progress. As the sixth legislature prepares to take the helm, the lessons learned and commitments forged during this session will undoubtedly guide the community towards a brighter future. The challenges remain, but the spirit of unity and determination displayed by the Parliament offers a beacon of hope for a stronger, more prosperous ECOWAS.

AWALCO Honours Speaker Tunis and other Lawmakers for Commitment to Democracy and regional integration

The Association of West African Legislative Correspondents (AWALCO) has awarded its maiden merit awards to four distinguished parliamentarians from across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The awardees were recognized for their exceptional commitment, dedication, and contributions to deepening democracy, enhancing the standard of living, and driving quality policy direction within the region.

The recipients of the prestigious awards include, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sidie Mohamed Tunis from Sierra Leone. He was commended for his openness, accessibility to the press, and relentless pursuit of direct elections, good governance, and regional integration. Hon. Awaji Abiante, a Member of the ECOWAS Parliament from Nigeria. He was recognized for his robust and rigorous contributions to parliamentary discourse, intellectual performance, and commitment to engaging in fruitful debates.

Hon. Vilane Abdoulaye, a member of the ECOWAS Parliament from Senegal who was lauded for his passionate and tireless efforts to transform the legislative process and his unwavering dedication to the well-being of citizens in the region.

Rt. Hon. Fatoumatta Njai, a female member of the

ECOWAS Parliament from The Gambia was celebrated as a champion for women's emancipation and child welfare, and for her instrumental role in securing resources for initiatives that empower women and girls.

Speaking at the award ceremony, AWALCO President Innocent Odoh emphasized the association's commitment to supporting the ECOWAS Parliament in fulfilling its critical mandate. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the media and the Legislature in raising awareness, mobilizing citizens, and promoting regional integration. Odoh further called on the regional Parliament to organise periodic training programs and workshops for AWALCO members to deepen their understanding of parliamentary procedures, administrative measures, and policy issues specific to the ECOWAS Parliament. This, he believes, will foster a more informed and effective media corps, better equipped to contribute to the development and progress of the West African region. The maiden AWALCO merit awards serve as a powerful recognition of the vital role parliamentarians play in shaping the future of West Africa. By acknowledging and celebrating their achievements, AWALCO hopes to inspire further dedication and commitment from regional lawmakers, ultimately leading to a more prosperous, democratic, and united West Africa.

