

# ECOWAS Parliament assures Community: 'We are deliberating on your behalf'

In spite of the glaring challenges confronting the West African sub-region, the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS Parliament) has assured citizens that it is committed to their welfare and development. The parliament gave the assurance as it began its 2025 Second Ordinary Session in Abuja. The parliament, therefore, called for unity, accountability, and deeper regional integration. The Speaker of the Parliament, Honourable Mémounatou Ibrahima, described the gathering as a collective commitment to the ideals of regional cooperation, peace, and democratic governance. Recalling the recent military coup in [Guinea-Bissau](#) as an unacceptable assault on democracy and a direct threat to regional stability, she said the attempted subversion of the people's will, especially after a peaceful and orderly electoral process, cannot be tolerated.

"In line with ECOWAS' principle of zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government, I strongly condemn the unlawful seizure of power in Guinea-Bissau. The ECOWAS Parliament fully aligns itself with the decisions taken by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. "We stand resolutely with the people of Guinea-Bissau. Their voices, expressed clearly and peacefully at the ballot box, must be respected. We will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that democracy is not only restored but safeguarded," she held. In his remarks, the First Deputy Speaker, Jibrin Barau, said parliamentarians have remained committed to the noble mission of representing the people, deliberating on their behalf, and defending their interests, which, according to him, has contributed towards a more united, prosperous, and sustainable West Africa. He noted that pursuant to Article 17 of the Supplementary Act relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament, parliamentarians are mandated to consider the draft community budget, render opinions, and, where necessary, propose amendments to ensure their alignment with the objectives of the community, which he said calls for diligence, courage, and foresight. Hon. Barau further disclosed a packed agenda, including the 25th Anniversary of the Parliament, the 2026 Community Budget, key committee reports, and engagements with institutional partners, describing the items as underscoring parliament's central role in shaping the future of the region.

Reflecting on the silver jubilee, Barau paid tribute to the originators, whose visions and courage gave birth to the ECOWAS institution, stressing that the milestone was, rather, a moment of assessment of the progress made in order to reinforce cohesion across member states. "For a quarter of a century, our parliament has stood as a symbol of the people's representation at the regional level, providing a forum where citizens' voices are heard, democratic oversight is enhanced, and regional integration is continuously deepened. "Over the next few days, we shall celebrate this milestone with the dignity, gratitude, and renewed commitment it deserves, mindful that our legacy will be judged by the future generations of West Africans," he said.

Commending Côte d'Ivoire for the peaceful presidential election and congratulating President Alassane Ouattara, Barau, however, condemned the coup in Guinea-Bissau, describing it as an unacceptable assault on democracy and a direct threat to regional stability. "Looking ahead, the Republic of Guinea prepares to hold its first presidential election on December 28 following the 2021 military takeover. This moment represents a

decisive step toward the full restoration of constitutional order. "I commend the government and people of Guinea for their resilience throughout this transition and for their steadfast commitment to the agreed ECOWAS roadmap. Their determination to return to democratic governance is both courageous and inspiring. ECOWAS stands firmly beside the people of Guinea as they move toward unity, stability, and democratic renewal. "However, even as we celebrate these advances, we have been confronted with deeply troubling developments in Guinea-Bissau. The recent military coup is an unacceptable assault on democracy and a direct threat to regional stability.

"This attempted subversion of the people's will, especially after a peaceful and orderly electoral process, cannot be tolerated. In line with ECOWAS' principle of zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government, I strongly condemn the unlawful seizure of power in Guinea-Bissau."

Barau also admonished that insecurity, economic pressures, climate change impacts, and fragile transitions demand coordinated and united action in the region, stressing the



responsibility of the Parliament to promote dialogue, inclusive governance, and peace. "While we celebrate the democratic gains mentioned above, we must also acknowledge the enormity of the persistent challenges within our community, namely insecurity, economic crises, effects of climate change, and fragile democratic transitions, as sadly demonstrated by the recent situation in Guinea-Bissau. "These challenges call for collective action. In the face of these challenges, our response must be coordinated, united, and firmly based on the principles of regional integration. "As the representative body of the people of West Africa, the ECOWAS Parliament must continue to assume its leadership role in formulating solutions, promoting dialogue, inclusive governance, and supporting our Member States in their relentless quest for peace, democracy, and prosperity," Barau said. As the session kicked off, he called for a renewed commitment to building a region where democracy thrives, peace is sustainable, and people prosper. "The future of our region depends not only on the decisions we make but also on the courage with which we act to ensure that these decisions resonate meaningfully with our people."

# ECOWAS leaders seek action against threats to democracy, rule of law

West African leaders have called for collective action by all member States to contain the prevailing threats to democracy and the rule of law in the sub-region. They made their positions known in Abuja during a ceremony organized by the ECOWAS Parliament to mark its 25th anniversary, stressing that the sub-region would not survive the prevailing threats. Julius Bio, Sierra Leone's President and Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, noted that ECOWAS had consistently supported past peace-building efforts, regional cooperation, security, migration, and human rights. He said that Sierra Leone was a major beneficiary of the transformative impact of such past efforts by both the ECOWAS Commission and Parliament. According to him, member states must rise up and take drastic action by fighting tooth and nail to arrest the current



threats to democracy in the sub-region. “The challenges before us demand an ECOWAS Parliament to raise a voice and give managerial accommodation. Together, let us reaffirm the commitments our people have made so far and the opportunities that remain. “ECOWAS Parliament has consistently demonstrated that collaboration is not just desirable, it is indispensable for the progress and stability of our nation. “As we mark this important milestone, let us also renew our resolve to build on the achievements of the past 25 years,” Bio, represented by his Foreign Minister, Timothy Kabba, said.

Dr Omar Touray, President of the ECOWAS commission, urged the Parliament to commit itself to the fight for the survival of democracy in the sub-region. He stated that, after 25 years of existence, the parliament should look forward to a golden jubilee in which democracy, the rule of law, and human rights are the

norms in West Africa rather than tribulations. “The silver jubilee of ECOWAS Parliament is coming at a time when we are celebrating ECOWAS' golden Jubilee as a community. “As we celebrate this silver jubilee, let us take stock of our achievements and progress, as well as our challenges and opportunities into the future. “We must therefore fight for democratic space, human rights and rule of law if we want our democracy to survive,” he said.

The Speaker of the parliament, Mémounatou Ibrahima, said that after 25 years, it was mature and must reflect on past milestones, and undertake a clear introspection on contemporary challenges toward a renewed future ambition. “Our mediation missions in member states experiencing political tensions remind us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict. “Peace rests fundamentally on just, credible, and inclusive institutions,”

she added. Goodluck Jonathan, former President of Nigeria, said that democracy, though challenged, remained the most reliable foundation for sustainable development and peaceful coexistence. According to him, the parliament plays a critical role in protecting democracy and inclusivity by supporting peaceful electoral processes across the sub-region. Jonathan decried the violent extremism in West Africa and solicited coordinated regional responses in which the Parliament serves as a convener of dialogue and oversight to strengthen collective security in the region. “The future of our region will

not survive in your free will. You must strive to strengthen the foundations of democracy in the sub-region. “Our region must remain firm against unconstitutional treaties or governments. “In an era where democracy faces new threats, your role in promoting credible elections, good governance, and a peaceful resolution of disputes is more critical than ever. “Let the Parliament be the strong voice for political stabilisation and for the principles enshrined in our ECOWAS protocols,” he said. Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, former Nigerian Vice President, said the sub-region was going through tumultuous times and called for a stronger, more integrated, peaceful, and collaborative approach to address them. “As our region navigates complex security, economic, and political challenges, the role of this Parliament becomes even more interesting and complicated,” he said.

# ECOWAS Parliament Marks 25 Years of Regional Integration, Democracy and People-Centered Governance

The ECOWAS Parliament on Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of December marked its 25th anniversary in Abuja with a colourful Silver Jubilee celebration that brought together regional leaders, diplomats, lawmakers and dignitaries who paid tribute to the institution's role in strengthening democracy, peace and integration across West Africa. Speaking on behalf of the President of the Nigerian Senate, Godswill Akpabio, the Deputy Senate President and First Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Senator Barau Jibrin, described the Parliament as “a beacon of hope, unity and regional solidarity.” He reaffirmed Nigeria's continued support for ECOWAS, stressing that robust collaboration between national parliaments remains vital to sustainable development, security and democratic deepening in the region. He highlighted the National Assembly's commitment to reinforcing legislative cooperation, adding that “the success of the ECOWAS Parliament is a shared success for all West Africans.” Earlier in her keynote address, the President of the ECOWAS Parliament, H.E. Hadja Mémounatou Ibrahima, said the Silver Jubilee was not only a celebration of institutional maturity but a moment for sober reflection. She paid glowing tribute to the founding fathers of ECOWAS—General Yakubu Gowon and the late President Gnassingbé Eyadéma, whose vision, she said, “laid the foundation for a Community of Destiny.” Ibrahima noted the transformation of the Parliament from a consultative body into a more empowered decision-making organ with expanded legislative, budgetary and oversight roles. She reaffirmed the Parliament's commitment to strengthening democracy, condemning recent coups in the region, particularly the situation in Guinea-Bissau

and calling for stronger cooperation on peace and security. She also emphasized women's political inclusion, youth empowerment, enhanced regional integration, and deeper engagement with civil society as priority areas for the sixth legislature. In his goodwill message, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr Omar Alieu Touray, hailed the Parliament as a vital voice of the people and commended past Speakers for building a resilient institution rooted in equity, solidarity and inclusivity. Touray warned against the shrinking of democratic space, urging parliamentarians to defend democratic norms and reject the “zero-sum politics” fueling instability in parts of the region. He called on lawmakers to become champions of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, stressing that ECOWAS must not allow military interventions or authoritarianism to erode democratic gains. A major highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of special awards of excellence to all past Speakers of the ECOWAS Parliament from the First to the Fifth Legislature in recognition of their contributions to democratic consolidation and regional integration. The gesture drew warm applause and symbolized the Parliament's appreciation for decades of service, leadership and sacrifice. The event, hosted with strong support from the Government of Nigeria, the National Assembly, the ECOWAS Commission and partner institutions, reflected a shared commitment to building a more integrated, peaceful and prosperous West Africa. With renewed optimism, the Parliament reaffirmed its resolve to advance people-centred governance as it steps into its next quarter-century of service to the region.

