



ECOWAS Parliament Adopts Commission's Budget for 2023



Lawmakers expressed their misgivings on the adoption of the 2023 Community Budget of 418,072,408 Unit of Account (UA) by the Parliament.

While the budgetary allocation for Peace and Security, a critical challenge of the region was pegged at 21,839,788, ECOWAS Institutions were allocated 366,254,680 for administration and salaries. Nigerian Lawmaker, Awaji-Inombek Abiante said that the Parliament should have been given more time to understand the budget and play its own role as advised by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria during the opening of the Session before adopting it. Honourable Abiante, a member of Nigerian House of Representatives, said

The Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, Parliament has adopted the report and recommendations for the ECOWAS Commission's consolidated budget of UA418,072,408 for the year 2023. The Administration and Finance Committee (AFC) of the ECOWAS Commission has earlier presented for the Parliament's consideration, a draft budget of Four Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million Unit of Account (UA 427,979,594) for 2023. The Chairperson of the AFC, Cristina Pedreira who had presented the budget before the Parliament said the Committee came up with the draft budget and recommendations sequel to the 32nd Meeting of the AFC which held from November 14–21, 2022.

The AFC report indicates a general appeal to member states to comply with the provisions of the ECOWAS Community Levy protocol to avoid imposition of the stipulated sanctions. This led to Parliamentarians condemning the lackadaisical attitude of some member states with regard to non-payment of community levies, which main source of funding the budget. The parliamentarians denounced the attitude of certain countries which have not made any repayments since the beginning of this year 2022. Parliamentarians expressed surprise that Member States like Burkina-Faso and Guinea are up to date with their dues while these countries are experiencing a military-political crisis that is disrupting their economies. They said countries that enjoy political and institutional stability were unable to honor their commitments to the community by paying back the community taxes that have been levied. Some Lawmakers of the Community Parliament have faulted the process for the adoption of the 2023 Community budget. They said the budget showed less focus on community citizens. The

that the ECOWAS Parliament must act beyond just an advisory role, and the right things must be done so that community citizens can feel the impact. "If you ask me, we would have done a little more. But going forward, I think Parliament has established that there is a need to do detailed understanding of the budget especially with the budget performance. "So going forward, we have to look at budget performance in details and where necessary we must invite heads of the various ECOWAS Institutions to account for what they have been spending. "It does not have to be business as usual especially when our President, Muhammadu Buhari told us at the opening that we should be diligent, detailed, transparent in what we do, especially with the budget. "Going forward, we have to ask more question. The argument is this is done, it must not be this is how it is done, but what is the right thing to be done. It is only by so doing we will be able to hold officials accountable for what they are doing and we will be responsible to the citizens. "If we continue to say Parliament is just advisory then we will not be able to go beyond where we are and make members of the community have impact of what we are doing," Abiante said. Billay Tunkara, Member of Parliament from the Gambia lamented the limited powers of the Parliament to scrutinise the budget before adopting it, stressing the need for enhanced power of the ECOWAS Parliament. Also, Mahama Ayariga, a Member of Parliament from Ghana noted that it was not the sole responsibility of ECOWAS Institutions to provide development projects and security to Member States but only to support. "Well, honestly, I do not think that there is anything particularly different about this budget," he explained.

ECOWAS Parliament Condemns Attack on Senegalese Amy Ndiaye Gniiby

... says action against initiatives to prevent violence against women

The ECOWAS Parliament has strongly condemned the recent physical attack on Honorable Amy Ndiaye Gniiby, a member of the National Assembly of Senegal on Thursday, 1st December, 2022. In a press statement signed by the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament Dr. Sidie Mohamed TUNIS, made available to the media, by its Communication Division, the Parliament said: "It is with great dismay and deep indignation that the ECOWAS Parliament has followed the scene of barbaric and despicable violence perpetrated on the Honorable Amy Ndiaye Gniiby, Member of the National Assembly of Senegal, on Thursday, 1st December 2022". According to the statement, "Meeting in plenary session on 3rd December 2022, during the 2022 second ordinary session, the Community Parliament deliberated and adopted the declaration, the content of which is as follows: "The ECOWAS Parliament strongly condemns this despicable act unworthy of a parliamentarian from the ECOWAS region at a time when we are witnessing a proliferation of initiatives to prevent and eliminate violence against women and come helping women who are victims of it; "Reiterates its commitment to respect for women, and

reaffirms that any form of violence against women is unacceptable, whatever the situation and whatever the circumstances; "Recalls that the State of Senegal, in addition to its fundamental law, has signed and ratified the international legal instruments relating to gender-based violence; "Reaffirms that this act, whatever the circumstances, cannot be justified nor tolerated in a country which guarantees parity between men and women in politics; "Considering that one of the key goals of the 5th Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament is to strengthen women participation in politics and that the action as witnessed is very regrettable as it sends negative impressions of the gains made in the past few years, the ECOWAS Parliament will continue to support and advocate for increased women participation and condemn any act of violence and abuse against women in general. "While wishing a speedy recovery to the victim MP, the ECOWAS Parliament urges the Senegalese State, in collaboration with the National Assembly of Senegal to take the necessary steps to ensure that justice is done for this unfortunate event".

ECOWAS Speaker seeks political support to upturn economic downturn in region

The Speaker of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament, Dr. Sidie Mohamed Tunis has called on national governments to effect fiscal and monetary policies that will upturn the dwindling economy of the region. Tunis gave the recommendation at opening session of the 2022 Second Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja which he said is convened to consideration of the Consolidated Community Budget for the year 2023, consideration of Reports from Joint, Standing and Ad hoc Committees, consideration of Reports from Fact Finding and Oversight Missions, presentation of Country Reports; and interactive sessions with some of their partners. According to the Speaker, members of the parliament have been tasked to ensure that the budget is directed towards programmes that address the needs, aspirations and interest of the people they represent. "In discharging this all-important assignment, let us bear in mind the challenges we face from urgent and looming crises in our Community. "We must summon the will, courage and commitment to act in ways that will impact positively on our region. "Permit me to state that as a region, we are confronted with unending chaos and crises, which are threatening the gains we have made in the recent past." He added that ECOWAS is confronted with unending chaos and crises, which are threatening the gains we have made

in the recent past. "Most prominent and most recent is the COVID-19 pandemic, with its impact on our economies. This has remained a cause for concern. The pandemic caused a slowdown in the pace of growth of our economies, many of which are still struggling to recover from the setbacks brought upon them.

"On the global front, we are confronted with the war between Russia and Ukraine, which has had far-reaching consequences on the welfare of our people. We are fully aware of the economic consequences of this war, as well as the attempt by our various Governments to cushion the effects. The global economy is, arguably, facing one of the worst challenges in living memory. "Our population has boundless potentials, our resource endowment is limitless, our opportunities are endless, yet our economies remain vulnerable and fragile. Consequently, we are presently experiencing hyperinflation, especially in relation to prices of commonly used necessities, like food, energy, and transportation. This has far-reaching implications on other goods and services. As a politician and a servant to the people, I am compelled to always ask; how do our people feed? How do our people pay up their daily bills? How do they address health challenges within their immediate and extended families? How do they provide for the education of their children," Mr Tunis asked.

After presentation of the Country Reports, What Next?.

By Peter Emuekpere

One of the items on the agenda of Ordinary Sessions of the ECOWAS Parliament is the presentation of country reports by National delegations as this provides an opportunity for parliamentarians to gain insight into the internal situations in Member States as it borders on political, security, human rights, health situation with emphasis on covid-19 economic situation, status of the implementation of community texts and protocols as well as environmental situation. A sitting was also usually devoted to the presentation and discussion of the report of the President of the Commission on the implementation of the Community work programme which also focuses on the economic, security, political, community programmes, ECOWAS institution programs and recommendations at the sub-regional level.

Besides the Parliament debates on several referrals submitted by the ECOWAS commission which are mostly centered on trade environment and education the Parliament is expected to give their opinion on these referrals as well as adapt some draft community arts. The referrals are passed to the Authority of Heads of State through the Commission. However, the main crux of this piece is to revisit the issue of the various presentation of country reports. The procedure had been that when the country reports are presented by the various national delegations, lapses and shortcomings are identified in the different structured template and this document after the various discussions are left on the shelves without a commensurate action and so in subsequent presentations some of the identified challenges are re-presented again in some of the various country reports and after deliberations by parliamentarians they are again left to rot on the shelves and so it continue as a wasted circle without action. And because presentation of Country reports has become like a ritual in the parliament, we have begun to see situations where national delegation of Member States try to outdo each other in their presentations in order to paint a good image of their various countries even at the detriment of their citizens. Instead of laying the fact bare to elicit healthy discussions and possibly proffer workable solution, we witness situations where presentations are tilted towards promoting the activities of their home government to pretend that all is well.



In an ideal situation this is not how it should be. Each National delegation should not only address the landmarks achieved by their various home Government but also be able to identify the lapses and governance loopholes that has not allowed their various Government to meet the yearning and aspiration of their citizens.

It is most likely that issues, challenges and Governance loopholes are identified in the various key areas which includes political, security, economic, human rights,

health and sanitary community text as presented by the national delegations.

The proper thing for parliament to do is to set up and ADHOC Committee to study these country reports, analyze them with a view to identifying the governance gaps as they affect their citizens of their various countries. The ADHOC Committee should aggregate these reports and present them through a workable template as referrals to the Commission for onward transmission to each member of the Authority of Heads of State and Government as it affects their respective states. These ECOWAS Leaders are then expected within a time frame to study these governance gaps and deploy the templates to address the identified problems. The same ADHOC Committee of the parliament will also be mandated by the plenary to carry out an oversight function on these referrals also within a specified time, follow up and ensure that the Authority of Heads of state have implemented and addressed the issues identified. At this stage if it is under the scope of the commission they should be carried along. This is the major way the parliament can prompt and ginger the Commission and Authority of Heads of State to address development and integration issues bothering the citizens of the sub-region. The ECOWAS Parliament should not only be seen to approve community budgets but must work to strictly ensure that the figures approved are deployed to meet the expected targets through oversight function and strategic supervisions.

If the sub-region must move from ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of People, there must be standards and strong synergy between the parliament who are supposed to be the true representatives of the people and citizens of the sub-region and the Commission but also with the Authority of Heads of State and Government.