

# West Africa Must Unite To Defeat Terrorism, Banditry, Tinubu Tells Faye

President Bola Tinubu has said that West African countries must unite to crush banditry, terrorism and other criminal activities plaguing the region. Tinubu stated this at the Presidential Villa in Abuja while receiving President Bassirou Diomaye Faye of Senegal where he called for an alignment of purpose and structure in West Africa to effectively address the challenges confronting the region. "We must defeat human trafficking; we must defeat terrorism, banditry, and poverty in our society. That must be our focus and commitment," a statement by presidential spokesman, Ajuri Ngelale, quoted Tinubu as saying.

The President described Nigeria and Senegal as brotherly nations, recounting both countries' long history of cooperation. "We are brothers. We have a shared interest in democracy. To make democracy sustainable in the interest of our people, we definitely must work hard. "I am glad that you are a shining example of patience, perseverance, and commitment to democratic values. "We must partner to make our people the focus of our democratic commitment. Your belief in the sovereignty of Africa is shared by all of us. But how can we work for our people and make them the focus of our democracy if we are violating the rule of law and promoting an unconstitutional takeover of government? "As the Chairman of ECOWAS, I am inviting you to collaborate and meet those other brothers and persuade them to come back to the fold. "We will continue to work together. We share good backgrounds, and we will continue

to embrace and promote democratic governance. We must be able to partner and build the freedom we believe in – in economic growth, development, and other spheres of governance. It is left for us to provide assurance to our people and walk our talk."

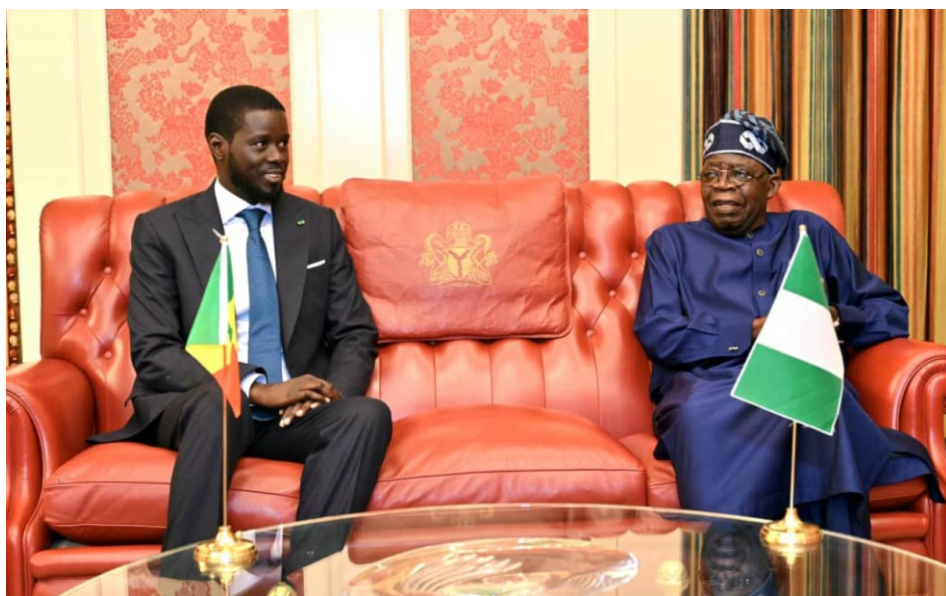
Tinubu advised that leaders in the region must make the people the point of convergence in governance, noting that the essence of democracy is lost when the people are not the focal point. The President emphasised that democratic governance, democratic values, and constitutional order are sacrosanct and must be protected. He also stated that critical institutions and precepts, like the judiciary and the rule of law, must be respected and observed for the sustenance of democracy.

In his remarks, President Faye acknowledged Nigeria and Senegal's shared values, ideals, and challenges, emphasizing that both nations have always had good

relations since the 1960s. "The good relations we have and the relations between our private sectors should be beneficial to our countries," he said.

The Senegalese President called for the reactivation of the Nigeria-Senegal Joint Commission to strengthen bilateral relations in diplomacy, trade, and other spheres. Speaking on ECOWAS, Faye said with Tinubu's wisdom and experience, relations among member states can be strengthened and bolstered for the advancement of the community. "ECOWAS is the beacon of successful regional integration in Africa and globally. It is something we owe to the founding fathers of the community, and I have no doubt that you want to continue this legacy of integration. The union is going through a rough patch, but not everything is lost.

"I know I can rely on your wisdom and experience, as the



leader of this great African nation, and the more recent example of Senegal; so that together, hand in hand, we can grow together, and that we can discuss with our brothers and convince them to come back into the fold. To come back and share our common democratic values and what we stand for. "Your wisdom and your democratic values should be an asset to that vision, and my youth and determination can also be an asset. If we come together, with all these assets and advantages, I am convinced we can open a window of opportunity to discuss. "United, we are stronger. Faced with common challenges, such as human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and all other challenges, we need to show resolve to confront these challenges so that economically we can thrive and satisfy the wishes of our people," the Senegalese President

# Regional bodies integration key to deepening democracy in Africa

– President Tinubu

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has called for the strengthening of regional economic communities to drive integration and trade ties among African nations in order to deepen democracy and accelerate development across the continent. He said through bitter experience, Nigeria has learned that the solution to poor democratic governance is to have more democracy. President Tinubu who made the call during the Summit on the State of Democracy in Africa in Abuja called for revitalization of sub-regional blocs like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) as vehicles to usher in an era of robust intra-African commerce, economic growth and job creation. The President who was represented at the event by Vice President Kashim Shettima said,

"The immense potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can only be maximally realized when there is concrete economic integration and collaboration at the different sub-regional levels," Delivering the keynote address, President Tinubu urged the regional bodies to prioritize minimizing trade barriers, promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, human capital development as well as value addition in agriculture and agro-allied sectors. "We must deliberate on ways

through which African sub-regional organizations can help foster better intra-African trade, achieve better food and energy security, promote higher rates of youth employment, alleviate poverty and realize greater prosperity for our people," the President said. President Tinubu noted that a reinvigorated sub-regional cooperation is critical for the successful implementation of the path-breaking AfCFTA by harmonising rules and regulations to facilitate the free movement of goods, services and people. While acknowledging the "despair about democratic reversals" due to recent military coups, he expressed optimism about polls held successfully in nations like Liberia, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. He said, "The tragedies of our nations and histories inspire our concern about the reversals of democratic governments, particularly in West Africa. That's why we are alarmed by the military coups in Mali, Guinea Conakry, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, and Gabon." The president however advocated discussions on empowering regional blocs to establish well-funded standby military forces "to help contain military adventurers and the rampaging waves of terrorism and religious extremism." President Tinubu urged African leaders to respect constitutional tenets like term limits, and ensure credible elections and autonomous institutions through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to achieve democratic consolidation. "This Summit must discuss ways of making the

APRM contribute to achieving good governance and democratic consolidation on the continent," he stated.

Declaring that Africa is no longer the "doormat of the world with street beggar economies", President Tinubu called for concrete measures through reinvented regional bodies to boost trade, enhance security and entrench constitutional democracy for development and prosperity. Earlier in his keynote remarks, former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, said the answer to the myriad of challenges confronting democracy in Africa is in re-examining the model of democracy passed on to countries in the continent by their colonial masters. He said leaders across the continent must come together to devise a form of contextual

democracy that takes into account past experiences, addresses contemporary challenges and emphasises good leadership, strong institutions, and a stable middle class, all reflecting Africa's rich cultural heritage. The former President who expressed concern about the growing discontent for democracy in the continent opined that the model that will work for Africa is one that takes into account the typical and predominant political system, and is

"suitably and appropriately placed to serve the objectives of the African people". In her goodwill message, the UN Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the SDGs, Dr Amina Mohammed, said the active participation of women and young people in politics, and other decision-making processes will strengthen democracy in the continent. She drew the attention of authorities in the continent to the effective implementation of laws, adherence to the tenets of accountability, and improved investment in democratic institutions, noting that they are critical to the sustenance of democracy in Africa and beyond. On his part, the former President of the Nigerian Bar Association and member of the Board of Directors, Shehu Musa Yar'adua Foundation, Abubakar Mahmoud (SAN), said the focus of the summit, which is "the state of democracy in Africa", aligns to the cornerstone of the Foundation's mission and vision. He said participants at the summit are expected to thoroughly interrogate the model of democracy practiced in Africa vis a vis current challenges experienced in the continent, to resolve the lingering issues and reshape democracy in the continent. Also present at the event were the President of the Ford Foundation, Mr. Darren Walker; Executive Director of Trust Africa, Dr. Ebrima Sall, and Co-Founder of Afrobarometer, Prof. Gyimah Boadi, among others.

