

ECOWAS Court, UNHCR unveil joint work plan for 2025

The Community Court of Justice, ECOWAS and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Abuja Office, on February 7, 2025, held a coordination meeting at the Headquarters of the Court in Abuja, Nigeria to finalize and adopt a joint work plan for 2025. The collaboration, rooted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in July 2022, is aimed at strengthening key areas including refugee protection, statelessness, judicial capacity-building, and human rights across the ECOWAS region. The meeting opened with a review of

Support for the implementation of international and regional instruments on statelessness, including a regional training course in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and an annual coordination meeting for statelessness focal points. * Capacity Building and Sensitization: Joint awareness campaigns in ECOWAS Member States, training sessions for legal practitioners, and consultations on a moot court programme designed by the ECOWAS Court. * Humanitarian Field Assessments: Fact-finding missions to refugee and



the 2024 joint work plan, which allowed both institutions to evaluate its success and ensure it met their mutual goals.

Following the assessment, the Court and the UNHCR presented and officially adopted the 2025 work plan, reinforcing their continued partnership in tackling the challenges faced by displaced persons and stateless individuals. Key to the discussions were the proposed initiatives for the year, which include partnership coordination meetings, capacity-building initiatives, legal awareness campaigns, and joint advocacy activities. The adoption of the 2025 work plan reinforces the shared commitment of the ECOWAS Court and UNHCR to promoting access to justice and enhancing legal protections for vulnerable populations particularly displaced persons and stateless individuals in West Africa.

Highlights of the 2025 joint work plan include:

* Partnership Coordination Meetings: Regular bi-monthly meetings to monitor the implementation of joint activities and share updates on court cases relevant to UNHCR's mandate. * Statelessness Initiatives:

internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to gain firsthand insights into the humanitarian situation in the region.

* Judicial and Legal Framework Support: Information sessions for UNHCR country offices, NGOs, and partners on the mandate and procedures of the ECOWAS Court, as well as the development of a roster of lawyers for capacity building initiatives.

* Resource Support: Legal resources including donation of legal books to the ECOWAS Court Library and specialized training for Court staff on refugee and international humanitarian law. Dr Yaouza Ouro-Sama, Chief Registrar of the Court, and Mr Hervé Kuate, UNHCR Senior Liaison Adviser, ECOWAS/ECCAS, both reaffirmed their commitment to working together to protect the rights of displaced persons and stateless individuals across West Africa. The adoption of the 2025 joint work plan marks another milestone in their shared mission to provide legal protection and assistance to vulnerable populations in the region. The meeting was attended by participants from various departments within the ECOWAS Court and UNHCR.