

AWALCO Commiserates with Nigerian Member of ECOWAS Parliament Over Wife's Death

The Association of West African Legislative Correspondents (AWALCO), the official press corps of the ECOWAS Parliament, has paid a condolence visit to a Nigerian member of the regional legislature, Hon. Awaji Inombek Abiante over the unfortunate death of his wife. The association led by its president Mr. Innocent Odoh, accompanied by the head of the Communication Division of the ECOWAS Parliament, Mrs. Uche Duru-Nwaotule, took time out of the very busy 2025 Second Extraordinary Session of the Parliament to mourn with the lawmaker over the sad incidence in his residence in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. Speaking during the visit, Mr. Odoh, praised the deceased for her years of steadfast dedication, love and loyalty to her husband and family, and offered uplifting words to the bereaved praying to God to give him the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss. Also speaking during the visit, Mrs Duru-Nwaotule described the death of Abiante's wife as "devastating" and urged him to remain strong at these trying moments. Responding, Hon. Abiante expressed appreciation to the Association, adding that he

was encouraged by the visit as he recovers from the shock of the death of his spouse with whom he had shared memorable times over the years. Other members of the AWALCO Delegation were Kwaku Danso,



ECOFEPA demands 30% representation, Push for Female ECOWAS President

Women parliamentarians from across the ECOWAS region, have called for the election of a female President of the ECOWAS Commission in the next administration and a 30 percent representation of women in the regional Parliament, saying women are the best instruments for peace, security, and development in West Africa. The call was made in Abuja during a three-day workshop themed "Strengthening Women's Role in Political Parties and Parliaments in West Africa and the Sahel," organized by ECOWAS, ECOFEPA, UN Women, UNOWAS, and the German Cooperation (GIZ), with the support of the European Union.

Speaking at the opening, President of the Female Caucus in the ECOWAS Parliament and lawmaker from Sierra Leone, Hon. Veronika Sisay, said the forum was designed to build a new generation of women leaders capable of influencing policies and political decisions in their respective countries. Hon. Sisay explained that although ECOWAS has made significant progress in women's representation, currently at 25 percent in Parliament, efforts are ongoing to achieve at least 30 percent participation, as mandated by regional frameworks. She noted that the mentoring programme was aimed at catching them young, to encourage young women to take leadership roles early and change the perception that politics is a dirty game. She said, "We are advocating for a woman President of the ECOWAS Commission. Let history record that under the current chairmanship of Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio, ECOWAS took a groundbreaking step towards inclusive leadership by appointing the first female Commission President. "Women are the best security. We are not just fighting for 30 percent for its sake. Women are partners in development and powerful instruments for progress. If only the men can give us a chance to work side by side with them, we can do it better. "Women have always been at the heart of peace processes in West Africa; from rebuilding communities affected by conflict to ensuring food security and education for children. Yet, our voices remain underrepresented in key decision-making spaces. We want to change that narrative." Speaking on the reason for mentorship, she said, "After we have left, they will take our steps. We want them to learn early because politics is not dirty; it's a platform to make impact and transform lives. "Our goal is to build a bridge between today's women leaders and the next generation, so that when it's their turn, they will already have the experience, confidence, and network to lead effectively."

Also speaking, Regional President of the ECOWAS Network of Young Women Leaders, Miatta Garmai Warwolor, said the session was part of a mentorship programme connecting experienced women parliamentarians with emerging female leaders from West Africa and the Sahel.

She added that over 200 young women from ECOWAS countries, including Nigeria, Liberia, Gambia, and Senegal, were drawn through national networks and political party nominations to participate in the mentorship programme. She said, "We are here for a simulation session where young women leaders from across the region exchange knowledge with ECOWAS female parliamentarians. The goal is to build their capacity, interest, and confidence in political leadership. "We hope to make this an annual event and a continuous process of bilateral mentorship between women parliamentarians and young leaders," Warwolor added.

In her remarks, President of the West African Network of Young Women Leaders (Ivory Coast), Koko Tomia Aude, said the initiative provides a platform for women to join decision-making bodies and push for gender inclusion. She noted that, "We want a 30 percent quota that will allow us to work in all spheres of decision-making. The moment is now for all women to be engaged, to lead their communities, and to change social norms. Women's leadership is not optional; it is necessary for sustainable development." Regional Vice President of the West Africa Youth Assembly and President of Project Nigeria, Awehi Hope Gabriel, described the programme as empowering. She said, "As a young woman in politics, this experience has broadened my understanding of leadership. It has shown us that we can aspire for positions at the highest levels of governance and still stay true to our values. The mentorship has renewed our courage to participate and lead change in our societies." The three-day session held in Abuja brought together over 200 young women leaders from across the ECOWAS and Sahel regions for mentorship and leadership training with female lawmakers from the ECOWAS Parliament.

ECOWAS Parliament @25

Looking Forward with Optimism Amid Challenges

By Innocent Odoh



The Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will roll out the drums to celebrate its 25th anniversary in November 2025 with varying levels of milestones amid challenges confronting the institution and the sub-region. The Speaker Rt. Hon. Memounatou Ibrahima made this known in her closing remarks at the 2025 Second Extraordinary Session of the Parliament in Port Harcourt, Rivers State in September. She said activities lined up for the celebration will start from November 14 to 16, 2025. The Parliament was established under Article 6 (in the list of Community institutions) and 13 (which specifically provides its establishment) of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993. Article 2 of the Supplementary Act, stipulates that the House of Representatives of the peoples of the Community shall be designated the "ECOWAS Parliament".

The ECOWAS Parliament is currently at its 6th Legislature since inception at the inaugural session of the 1st Legislature on 16 November, 2000, in Bamako, Mali with the election of Prof. Ali Nuhoum Diallo as the first Speaker with a five-year mandate starting in November 2000. Article 4 of the Supplementary Act relating to the enhancement of the powers of Parliament stipulates that the objectives of the Parliament shall among others, be to: Contribute to the efficient and effective implementation of objectives and policies of the Community; Strengthen representative democracy in the Community; Ensure the right of scrutiny and involvement of the West African populations in the process of integration of the region and Contribute to the promotion of peace, security and stability in the West African region. In line with the rotational system of the alphabetical order of Member States, the Speakership of the 6th Legislature fell on Togo and consequently, Rt. Hon. Memounatou Ibrahima, a ranking member of the Togolese delegation to the Parliament, was unanimously elected to preside of the 6th Legislature, with tenure of four years.

The 6th Legislature was installed by Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu President, who was the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in May 2024 in Abuja and Ibrahima also holds the record as the first female speaker of the Parliament. Initially the life of the Legislature was 5 years but this changed due to

the enactment of Article 5 of the Supplementary Act, which now determines that the life of the Legislature shall be for four (4) years from the date of its inauguration by the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government. Between 2000 and 2025, the Regional legislature has witnessed massive changes and its responses to the crises confronting the region within its powers have been encouraging amid threats of new challenges.

Prof. Diallo made great efforts to firmly establish the Parliament as a bastion of democracy from the cradle and some level of success was achieved. For instance, during the Mano River crisis, which was a period of severe civil wars and instability in the Mano River region of West Africa, specifically Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, the Parliament rose to the occasion to find solutions to the crisis. The conflicts had led to widespread death and destruction, with millions displaced, and had lasting impacts on the region's political and economic stability, driven by issues like governance failures and resource control.

Former Nigerian Senator, Dr. Mao Uhuabunwa, who served as ECOWAS Parliament Committee Chairman for Foreign Affairs Defence and Security from 2001 to 2003, deployed resources to open channels of discussions and negotiation with rebel groups. Subsequently, the ECOWAS Commission and the Authority of Heads of State of the sub-region moved to address the crisis in the Mano River region. This was one of the major achievements of the First Legislature. Since then, ECOWAS Parliament has engaged with the Mano River crisis through delegations to investigate border disputes and address regional security, such as the August 2025 mission to the Yenga border dispute in much the same way it has attended to other crises. Although the Parliament's direct legislative power is limited, it has supported conflict prevention, human rights, and democratic governance in the sub-region, with its activities aimed at promoting peace and economic integration within the region. However, its effectiveness is hindered by a lack of real legislative power and limited communication between the Parliament and member states.

Despite the enormous efforts of the legislature, the region still faces a deluge of crises ranging from terrorism and violent extremism, economic crisis occasioned by low investments and unemployment, youth migration, poverty, inflation among others. Right now the regional body is facing another issue which is the exit of three member countries. Incidentally Mali, the country that produced the first speaker, has exited the ECOWAS bloc following disagreements with ECOWAS over a coup in the country. Burkina Faso and Niger are also no longer part of the Parliament over coups and the greater ECOWAS has depleted its membership from the initial 15 member states to 12 now. It is also important to interrogate the issues of Direct Election into the regional assembly, which is a major focus from the 2000, which remains unattended to. If this process is hastened and implemented, it will give the region the authentic representative democratic outlook. However, the current speaker, Ibrahima, is optimistic that the parliamentary democracy has been established with the Parliament steadily making efforts to strengthen regional stability and integration including making resolutions that will boost economic development and create jobs for the youths going forward.