

# ECOWAS mobilizes \$2.61 billion to fund Standby Force

**T**he Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is fine-tuning strategies to meet the \$2.61 billion annually required to emplace a 5,000-personnel West African Standby Force. The Ministers of Defence and Finance from the regional bloc gathered in Abuja to finalize plans for funding the regional counter-terrorism force. ECOWAS aims to establish a 5,000-personnel standby force to tackle security challenges in the region, with an initial deployment of 1,650 personnel. The region will require an estimated \$481.5 million for the initial 1,650-personnel brigade and \$2.61 billion for the full 5,000-personnel force in the first year. The meeting addressed the challenge of funding the already activated standby force and explored modalities for mobilizing funds. Dr. Omar Aliou Touray emphasized that terrorist activities have serious implications for

international trade and investment in the region, and ECOWAS leaders have identified terrorism as a major threat to the integration effort of the body. ECOWAS has been actively engaged in counter-terrorism efforts, deploying a multi-faceted approach that includes developing a comprehensive Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, establishing a Standby Force, and fostering regional cooperation. Nigeria's Minister of Defence Mohammad Badaru Abubakar highlighted the complex and evolving threats of terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organized crimes, and the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government. He emphasized the need for predictable, sustainable, and transparent funding modalities to support the regional counter-terrorism force.

## ECOWAS Parliament Mulls Adoption of AI for Legislative Activities



**T**he ECOWAS Parliament is considering the adoption of Artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool to enhance efficiency in the legislative business of the regional body. Speaker of the Parliament, Rt Hon Memounatou Ibrahima gave a hint to this fundamental policy direction during the closing ceremony of the 2025 Second Parliamentary Seminar in Port Harcourt Rivers State with the theme "Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Parliamentary Efficiency, Ethical Governance and Development in the ECOWAS Region." The three-day seminar that ended on Wednesday, featured presentations by experts, panel discussions and robust debate by the Parliamentarians on the importance of the technology to legislative functions, as well as emphasis on the regulatory framework to mitigate its risks.

Represented by the Fourth Deputy Speaker, Billay Tunkara, Hon Ibrahima, noted that the AI revolution is irreversible, stressing that within a short time it is redefining and transforming the future of West African economies, society and governance. "Within a short time, AI has moved beyond the realm of science fiction to become a powerful force in our world driving many changes in all areas of life. At the same time, it is

challenging our shared values and fundamental human rights. "AI when properly harnessed by parliament will ensure informed deliberation, optimized legislation and enhanced parliamentary oversight. "It provides us with the means to make our work more efficient, more transparent and more responsive to citizens' expectations. It is up to us all to embrace this tool, train our staff and adopt our regulations and rules of procedures to accommodate this new technology," the Speaker said. According to Ibrahima, the seminar marks the starting point for a collective and decisive approach to AI by ECOWAS Parliament, even as she expressed optimism that recommendations from the meeting will translate to concrete and ambitious action plans. During the deliberations, many lawmakers had acknowledged the necessity of the technology in the current global evolution, but expressed concerns about the threats it poses and urged a cautious approach to its adoption in order not to harm the region that is characterized by vulnerabilities associated with little infrastructure. But as the region grapples with the reality of AI, it has to find ways to domesticate it and navigate the delicate balance between embracing AI's transformative potential and preserving the human-centered values that underpins democratic governance. The seminar was followed by the 2025 Second Extraordinary session of the 6th legislature in the oil-rich city.

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