

# ECOWAS concludes modalities for deployment of Standby Force to Niger

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff have concluded plans on the deployment of ECOWAS Standby Force for restoring Democratic rule in the republic of Niger. Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musa who disclosed this at the end of the extraordinary meeting of ECOWAS Chiefs of defense staff in Accra – Ghana, said the planning mission which started since 2nd of this month has ended. He noted that various states are ready to accomplish the intervention which include strategic based capacity; strategic objectives, required equipment and commitment of member states which is very encouraging. Commissioner Musah, noted that ECOWAS, is a rule based organization and that member states have signed on to certain obligations; that they would cede part

of their sovereignty to the collective good of the people, including their national constitutions which the junta in Niger has flouted. He, however, said that military intervention, is not their preferred option; but because of the impediments the junta keeps putting in the way for peaceful settlements for restoration of constitutional order, it remains an option to explore, adding that all the options are still on the table including mediation which they are still pursuing. And if the Junta responds positively to the requests of the Authority of heads of states and government there would be no need to deploy the military. The Commissioner added that the meeting concludes the planning phase of the mission as the standby force is ready for deployment as soon as the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS region gives an order for the intervention mission.

## AU, ECOWAS must interrogate French role in collapse of African economies"

– *Senator Ita Enang*

A former Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and former Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari on National Assembly Matters (Senate), Barrister Ita Solomon Enang has advised that the African Union (AU) and the ECOWAS Commission should engage with France to find out its role in the collapse of economies and security of Africa, especially the Francophone countries of West Africa. Making these suggestions in Abuja, at a "National Dialogue on ways of Ensuring Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria", organized by the Rufus Ebegba Centre for Leadership and Environmental Sustainability (REC), Senator Ita Enang also said: "Nigeria should revisit the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement of humans, goods and services" According to him, "The Africa Union and ECOWAS must have a whole session to engage France on Africa, on the role of France on the collapse of economies and security of nations in Africa, particularly, the Francophone countries. I had cause to appreciate Great Britain, who was the colonial master of Nigeria because when they granted us independence, it was independence indeed. But the principle of assimilation is so dangerous

and endangered the former British territories; so, what they are doing today is very dangerous. "So, African Union, as a union of the whole Continent should hold a conference with France over France. And we should not partner France to say that the conference should be held in France; No. We have witnessed the collapse of these Francophone nations, their security, economies and immigration". "Am not afraid to say this, I take personal responsibility to say this that France must be interrogated. For national security of Nigeria and Africa, we must engage France.

"Nigeria must revisit the ECOWAS Free Movement and Goods. I am saying this because the ECOWAS free movements of goods and services is benefiting other countries and endangering some other countries, to the detriment of Nigeria. Most of the things we see happening in Niger, Chad are now happening in Nigeria and no more happening in those countries, which means that those people have moved to Nigeria". It is quite interesting to note that the 26 July Coup in Niger Republic appears to have awakened the deep-seated concerns and worries of economic and security collapse by citizens across the region. These concerns were expressed through protests

# Inequality a major factor in rising crisis in West Africa – Tunis

The Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has identified inequality as one of the major factors causing rise in crisis, including military coups and insecurity in the West African subregion. The Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Dr. Sidie Tunis, made this known at the opening of the delocalized meeting of the Joint Committee of the ECOWAS Parliament Committee on Political Affairs, Peace, Security and the African Peer Review Mechanism, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Social Affairs, Gender and Women Empowerment held in Monrovia, Liberia. He said that supporting the participation of people from vulnerable and marginalized groups in the decision-making and democratic processes of the societies is key to continued peace, security and sustainable development. Tunis acknowledged that every meeting of the Parliament is an opportunity to analyze and make proposals to better understand and control political, economic, and social developments in West Africa.

While noting that the meeting will focus on one of the priorities of ECOWAS Vision 2050, which is to promote good governance and consolidate irreversible peace, security, as well as development in the region, Dr. Tunis said: "As we all know, inequality has been one of the bases or causes of subversive acts in our region. "The marginalization of vulnerable groups from important decision-making processes, particularly ethnic or religious minorities, women and young people, provides fertile ground for conflict of violent extremism." He said: "We must convince ourselves that supporting the participation of people from vulnerable and marginalized groups in the decision-making and democratic processes of our societies is imperative for peace, security and sustainable development."

The Speaker added that: "Political inclusivity has the advantage of enabling all points of view to be expressed and taken into consideration, and of enhancing the representation of every segment of the population, including women and young people." He revealed that the delocalized meeting, which is being held on the theme: "Enhancing political inclusivity in the participatory governance process: a mechanism for promoting peace and security", was part of activities designed by the ECOWAS Parliament to continually demonstrate its openness to the citizens of the region, stressing that it also provides an opportunity to share experiences and collaborate with national institutions in the pursuit of the integration objectives of ECOWAS.

Liberia's Vice President, Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor lamented that political inclusivity is still far from being achieved, insisting that going by a few statistics as indicated by a January 2023 UN

Women Facts and Figures report, women on the continent particularly and globally in general are still yet to be accorded the acceptable number in distribution of political offices. She noted that inclusive political processes are crucial to sustaining peace and conflict prevention; establishing and strengthening political processes aimed at improving the participation and political influence of citizens; making governments and institutions more accountable and transparent, and building a stronger and more inclusive social contract between government and the people for greater access to opportunities, amongst other issues. Taylor said though much has been done over the past 30 years to bring to the front burner the issue of equal participation of both genders, but the fact remains that even at the ECOWAS Parliament where the mandatory acceptable standard is a minimum 30% representation from each member state ; current statistics



indicated that out of 115 members only 21 members are females, a mere 18.26%. She argued that: "A woman is human. She is not better, wiser, stronger, more intelligent, more creative or more responsible than a man. Likewise, she is also not less..." She asked the parliamentarians that "as you navigate the discussions on the way forward towards greater peace and security in our sub-region, I crave your indulgence to proffer policy prescriptions which compel our National Governments to take affirmative actions for the inclusion of women at all levels in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of governments."

President of the ECOWAS Commission, Omar Alieu Touray also noted that the

disconnect between the government and its citizens is a contributing factor to the volatility and threats to democracy in the sub-region. Touray who was represented by Mrs Josephine Nkurumah, Permanent Representative of the ECOWAS Commission to Liberia urged Members of the ECOWAS Parliament to consider the role of civic engagements as a key strategy to building a more inclusive society. He said that the ECOWAS Parliament's delocalized meeting was apt and the Commission awaits recommendations from the meeting that it can work with the Parliament to ensure inclusivity of all ECOWAS citizens in the democratic process of the sub region. "The seeming disconnects between the governed and those who govern have contributed in part to the volatility of the sub-region leading to discontent in our communities. "It is pertinent that in other to have effective inclusiveness and participatory government processes, our citizens must be engaged, involved and discerning. "We look forward to a collaborative effort to building a more inclusive society in our governance processes for peace and security which are prerequisite to our economic and social integration as a sub region," Touray said.

# Supreme Courts must uphold mandate of citizens to prevent crises in West Africa

– Benedict Sannoh

The Former Justice Minister of the Republic of Liberia, Cllr. Benedict Sannoh has said that the mandate of citizens must be upheld by the Supreme Courts of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to prevent post-election crises. Sannoh's call was contained in his paper "Role of Judiciary in the Prevention and Management of Electoral Crisis" delivered at the Delocalized meeting of the ECOWAS Parliament's Joint Committees on Political Affairs, Peace, Security and the African Peer Review Mechanism, Judicial Affairs and Human rights, Social Affairs, Gender and Women Empowerment in Monrovia, Liberia. The Former Liberian Minister said that the manner at which elections are adjudicated by the Judiciary is the foundation for peace or crises. This is also as Sannoh stressed for the need for the independence of the judiciary and for political parties must also play active and proactive roles in the use of the judiciary. "The judiciary through the supreme court should ensure that the constitution mandate is upheld. "The role of the supreme court in the adjudication of these cases should be to ensure that the opinions enhance, promote and entrench the respect, protection of the will of the people. "As expressed by their votes in the elections conducted consistent with the constitution, and we see a consistent trend in this direction. "The Supreme Courts should be keen on the question of adherence to fundamental rights articulated in the Constitution especially on the question of no one being deprived of a liberty, poverty, privilege or any other right. "Except as an outcome of a hearing consistent with the

provisions of the constitutions and in accordance with the due process of law. "Political parties should play a more proactive role in the use of the judiciary; monitor every statutory and administrative action taken by the elections commission, the legislature, or the institutions within the executive branch. "Political parties should also collaborate in in raising issues that require judicial determination, referendum, cleaning of the voters roll,". Sannoh, while responding to interventions from Members of Parliament on his paper said that the constitution of Member States must also be properly implemented. According to the former Justice Minister, the constitution of the country reflects the will and expectations of its citizens. He noted that all concerns of citizens ought to be addressed by provisions of the constitution. In separate interventions, some ECOWAS Member of Parliament lamented the executive control of the judiciary, recommending that judges be voted by citizens rather than being appointed by the executive. Hon. Ladi Ayamba, Member of Parliament from Ghana said that the decisions of some courts in West Africa have at several times been influenced by the executive, which makes justice denied in most cases. "When Judges are appointed by the executive, they can get them to say anything in their favor. "I think this is something that we must look at changing in our various country's constitutions. "For me, I would recommend that judges should be voted for by the people," Ayamba said.

## ECOWAS Parliament maintain stance on diplomacy as Solution to Niger Republic Impasse

The Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has reiterated its call for a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Republic of Niger, following the military coup that overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26. This was part of the discussion at the consultative parley of the Ecoparl Ad-hoc committee on Republic of Niger stalemate had with the President of ECOWAS Commission, Omar Aliou Touray, in Abuja. The Ad-hoc committee met with the President of ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Touray, to discuss the situation. A member of the Nigerian delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament, Senator Ali Ndume, said that the Parliament's position on the crisis remained unchanged. "We believe that a military intervention would be counterproductive and would only lead to more instability in Niger," Ndume said. "We urge the junta to return to the negotiating table and find a peaceful solution to this crisis." Ndume said that the resolve is informed by the grave implications of a military intervention in Niger, even as he insisted that there was no alternative to diplomatic solution. The meeting with Touray was one of several diplomatic efforts being made by ECOWAS to resolve the crisis. On August 12, the Parliament held a virtual meeting on the situation in Niger, where most members voted in favor of a diplomatic solution. The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State, however, has authorized the use of force to restore constitutional order in Niger. Military Chiefs from across the

region have met to plan for a possible military intervention, but ECOWAS has said that it remains open to a diplomatic solution. The Nigerien junta has so far resisted calls to restore constitutional order, but it has said that it is open to dialogue. The ECOWAS Parliament has a long history of mediating political crises in West Africa. In 2010, the Parliament helped to broker a deal that restored constitutional order in Niger after a coup. The Parliament has also played a key role in supporting democratic elections in West Africa. In 2023, the Parliament sent fact-finding missions to Nigeria and Sierra Leone to assess the preparations for their elections. The Parliament's efforts to resolve the crisis in Niger are part of its commitment to democracy and human rights in West Africa. The Parliament has said that it will continue to work with ECOWAS and other partners to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. Since establishment, the Parliament has scored diplomatic high marks with timely and fruitful interventions and mediations. It would be recalled that it was the meeting of the Community Parliament with rebels around Sierra Leone-Liberia-Mano River area that birthed series of negotiations that culminated in lasting peace around the Mano River region. The Parliament has also been relentless in efforts at mitigating crisis before they became full blown. For instance, at peak of a brewing crisis in Senegal, over tenure disputes last year, the Parliament constituted an Ad-hoc mediation committee. This move led to the prevailing peace in the West African country.