ECOWAS AFFAIRS
History And Background

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on 28th May, 1975, in Lagos, Nigeria.

The idea for a West African Community goes back to President William Tubman of Liberia, who made the call in 1964. An agreement was signed between Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in February, 1965, but this came to nothing. In April, 1972, General Gowon on Nigeria drew up proposals and toured 12 countries, soliciting their plan from July to August 1973. A meeting was then called at Lome from 10-15 December, 1973, which studied a draft treaty. This was further examined at a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra in January 1974 and by a Ministerial meeting in Monrovia in January, 1975.

Finally, 15 West African Countries signed the treaty for an Economic Community of West African States (Treaty of Lagos) on 28th May, 1975. The Protocols launching ECOWAS were signed in Lome, Togo on 5th November, 1976.

In July, 1993, a revised ECOWAS Treaty designed to accelerate economic integration and to increase political co-operation, was signed. ECOWAS has been designated one of the five regional pillars of the African Economic Community (AEC). ECOWAS is composed of the following West African Countries:

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cape Verde
Côte d’Ivoire
The Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Togo

The Headquarters is at Abuja, the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Objectives

* To promote co-operation and integration leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples;
* To ensure economic growth;
* Foster relations among Member States and contribute to the progress and
development of the African continent.

**Ecowas Fundamental Principles**

* Equality and interdependence of Member States;
* Inter-State co-operation;
* Solidarity and collective self-reliance;
* Harmonization of policies and integration programmes;
* Non-aggression between Member States;
* Maintenance of regional peace, stability and security;
* Peaceful settlement of disputes;
* Respect, promote and protection of human rights;
* Promotion and consolidation of democracy
* Accountability, economic and social justice.

**HOW TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES**

* Harmonizing, co-ordinating national policies and promoting, integration programmes, projects and activities;
* Promoting the establishment of joint production and joint venture enterprises;
* Establishing a common market;
* Establishing an Economic Union through adoption of common policies in the economic, financial, social and cultural sectors and the creation of a Single Monetary Zone;
* Strengthening relations and promoting the flow of information among civic society, organizations, media, workers, and trade unions.

**Institutions**

* The Authority of Heads of State and Government;
* The Council of Ministers;
* The Community Parliament (Abuja);
* ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) (Lome);
* ECOWAS Regional Investment;
* West African Monetary Agency (WAMA) (Sierra Leone);
* West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) (Ghana);
* West African Health Organisation (WAHO) (Burkina Faso);
* ECOWAS Gender Development Centre;
* The specialized Technical Commissions.

**Authority Of Heads Of State And Government**

The Authority of Heads of State and Government of Member States is the Supreme institution of the Community and is composed of Heads of State and Government of Member States.

The Authority is responsible for the general direction and control of the Community and takes all measures to ensure its progressive development and the realization of its objectives. It undertakes the under listed functions.

* Determines, the general policy and major guidelines of the Community, gives
directives;
* Harmonizes and co-ordinates the economic, scientific, technical, cultural and social polices of Member States;
* Oversees the functioning of Community institutions and follow-up implementation of Community objectives;
* Prepares and adopts its rules of procedure;
* Appoints the Executive Secretary in accordance with the provision of the Treaty;
* Appoints on the recommendations of Council, the External Auditor;
* Delegates to the Council, where necessary, the authority to take such decisions as stipulated in the Treaty;
* Refers where it deems necessary any mater to the Community Court of Justice when it confirms, that a Member State or Institution of the Community has failed to honour any of its authority or has abused the powers conferred on it by the provisions of the Treaty, by a decision of the Authority or a regulation of the Council;
* Requests the Community Court of Justice as, and when necessary, to give advisory opinion on legal questions;
* Exercises any other power conferred on it under the Treaty.

The Authority meets at least once a year in Ordinary session. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of the Authority or at the request of a Member State provided that such a request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The Office of the Chairman is held every year by a member State elected by the Authority.

**Council Of Ministers**

The council comprises the Minister in-charge of ECOWAS Affairs and any other Minister of each Member State. The Council is responsible for the functioning and development of the Community. Its functions include the following:

Make recommendations to the Authority on any action aimed at attaining the objectives of the Community;
* Appoint all statutory appointees other than the Executive Secretary;
* By the powers delegated to it by the Authority, issue directives on matters concerning co-ordination and harmonization of economic integration policies;
* Make recommendations to the Authority on the appointment of the External Auditors;
* Prepare and adopt its rules of procedure;
* Adopt the staff regulations and approve the organizational structure of the institutions of the Community;
* Approve the work programmes and budgets of the Community and its institutions;
* Request the Community Court of Justice, where necessary to give advisory opinion on any legal questions;
* Carry out all other functions assigned to it under the ECOWAS Treaty and exercise all powers delegated to it by the Authority.

The Council meets at least twice a year in Ordinary Session. One of such sessions shall immediately precede the ordinary session of the Authority. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of the Council or at the request of a Member State provided that such request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The Office of Chairman of Council is held by the Minister responsible
for ECOWAS Affairs of the Member State elected as Chairman of the Authority.

Community Parliament

The ECOWAS Parliament convened in May, 2002, with 115 of Parliament representing all the Member States except Cote d’Ivoire. Togo, Liberia, Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Republic of Benin, the Gambia and Sierra Leone have five (5) Parliamentarians each; Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal have six (6) Parliamentarians each; Cote d’Ivoire is entitled to seven (7) representatives; Ghana has eight (8) and Nigeria has thirty-five (35). Membership is constituted from the membership of the national parliaments of each member state, should a member lose his/her seat in the national parliament, they would lose their seats in the regional parliament. The ECOWAS Parliament is situated in Abuja, Nigeria and at present only acts in a consultative and advisory capacity.

The Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Professor Ali Nouhoum Diallo, has expressed the intention of the Parliament to acquire legislative powers in the future as well as to institute directly elected representatives.

Community Court Of Justice

In October, 1999, ECOWAS decided to establish a Court of Justice following a two-day meeting of Ministers of Justice in Abuja. The Court addresses complaints from Member States and institutions of ECOWAS, as well as issues relating to defaulting nation. The Court is a permanent institution and has a President, Chief registrar and seven judges.

Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretary is elected for a four-year term, which may be renewed only. The current Executive is Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas of Ghana.

Specialised Commissions

The following Technical Commissions are established within the Economic Community of West African States:

* Food and Agriculture;
* Industry, Science and Technology and Energy;
* Environment and Natural Resources;
* Transport, Communications and Tourism;
* Trade, Customs, Taxation, Statistics, Money Payments;
* Political, Judicial and Legal Affairs, Regional Security and Immigration;
* Human Resources, Information, Social and Cultural Affairs;
* Administration and Finance Commission.

H.E. President Mamadou Tandja of Niger currently chairs ECOWAS.

Some Achievements Made So Far

Trade, Immigration And Customs
* Creation of a Free Trade Area in progress
* Elimination of customs duties and taxes of equivalent effect on goods and approved products;
* Removal of non-tariff barriers on trade of goods within Member States;
* Harmonization of trade liberalization scheme between ECOWAS and UEMOA;
* Establishment of the Automated Systems of Customs Data (ASYCUDA)
* Implementation of Community levy.

**Trade Promotion**

* Creation of Trade Opportunities Management Systems (SIGOATOPS)

**Free Movement Of Persons**

* Abolition of Visa
* Right of residence and establishment
* Removal of roadblocks and security checkpoints
* Introduction of ECOWAS Passport
* Harmonization of Customs documents, regulation and formalities.

**Tourism**

Development of hotel classification system for West Africa.

**Monetary And Financial Matters**

* Harmonization of economic and fiscal policies
* Facilitation and liberalization of payments
* Circulation of ECOWAS Travelers’ Cheque
* Establishment of ECObank
* Establishment of the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI)

**Transport**

* Establishment of ECOMARINE
* Construction of the trans-coastal (from Lagos to Nouakchott) and of the trans-Sahelian highways (from Dakar to N'Djamena), a total of 9000 km of road and 11000 km interconnecting roads to open up land-locked countries
* Establishment of ECOWAS Brown Card insurance scheme
* Standardization of transport legislation in Member States

**Agriculture**

* Establishment of seed production centers in nine Member States
* Establishment of eight cattle breeding centers in three Member States
* Control of animal diseases
* Publication of “pesticides Bulletin” on the use of risk-free pesticides.
* Publication of ECOWAS Transhumance Certificate
**Industry**

* ECOWAS Industrial Master Plan
* 64 projects at the Investors’ Forum, now being implemented

**Energy**

* Master plan for development of the means of energy production and interconnection of electricity grids
* Adoption of an Energy Charter Treaty

**Environment**

* Ban on movement and deposit of toxic wastes within ECOWAS Member States
* Control of the spread of floating weeds

**Youth, Sports, Culture And Social Affairs**

* Award of two ECOWAS Prizes of Excellence in African Pharmacopoeia (1997) and Literature (1999)
* Creation of the Forum of Associations Recognized by ECOWAS (FARE)
* Creation of socio-professional organisations (women, youth, journalists, sports, economic operators, etc)
* Institutionalisation of the ECOWAS African Wrestling Tournaments

**Health And Drug Control**

* Creation of a single West African Health Organisation (WAHO)
* Adoption of harmonized laws on drug control
* Establishment of ECODRUG Fund

**Gender Issues**

* Creation of the West African Women’s Association
* Adoption of an ECOWAS Gender Policy

**Education**

* Establishment of the Decade of Education in West Africa (DEWA)
* Adoption of an ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training.

**Telecommunications**

* Connection of West African capitals by automatic telephone, telex and telefax links through the Intelcom 1 Programme
* Creation of the Lome telecommunications centre

**Peacekeeping And Good Governance**

* Adoption of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,
Peace and Security
* Adoption of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance
* Creation of a West African peacekeeping force called ECOMOG-end of eight-year civil war and organisation of democratic elections in 1997 in Liberia
* Restoration of peace and security in Sierra Leone
* Contribution to the return of peace in Guinea Bissau and Cote D’Ivoire
* Declaration of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light weapons in West Africa
* Destruction of weapons in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger and Nigeria – mutual assistance in criminal matters
* Adoption of the Protocol on the Fight Against Corruption

**Fight Against Crime**

* Establishment of the Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA) in Dakar

**Prospects**

* Institutionalising of ECOFEST (ECOWAS Festival of Arts and Culture)
* Interconnection of railway lines
* Harmonisation of ECOWAS maritime regulations
* Harmonisation of telecommunications policies and establishment of regional regulatory body
* Implementation of Intercom II Programme: digitalisation of inter-state link using new technologies and provision of new services
* Energy distribution via the West African Power Pool
* Construction of a gas pipeline from Nigeria to Ghana
* Creation of a borderless zone
* Harmonisation of economic and financial policies
* Harmonisation of commercial laws
* Extradition
* Adoption of ECOWAS Convention on the Recognition of Equivalence of Degrees, Certificates and other Qualities
* Introduction of a single tourist visa
* Establishment of observatories on bad practices along West African corridors
* Construction of joint border posts
* Creation of an ECOWAS Radio/Television Station

**Challenges**

* Consolidation of democracy and reinforcement of good governance
* Consolidation of regional peace and security and sustainable economic development
* Eradication of poverty
* Greater involvement of the private sector in integration activities
* Greater involvement of civil society and women in integration programmes
* Industrialisation of the region
* Protection of the environment
* Ensuring food security in the sub-region
Some Achievements Made By The ECOWAS Division In Ghana

* Two hundred and twenty (220) Ghanaian companies and over three hundred (300) products have being admitted to the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS).

* Half yearly luncheons for ECOWAS Ambassadors and High Commissioners have been instituted since 2001. This offers an opportunity for the Ambassadors and High Commissioners to discuss trade and investment within the sub-region.

* A Technical Committee on the Interstate Road Transit (ISRT) under the supervision of the National Guarantor (SIC) has been formed to oversee the launching and implementation of the ISRT Convention.

* Bilateral Talks on Trade between Ghana and Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire in 2003 were held to promote economic co-operation.

* In the Ministry’s determination to get non-tariff barriers lowered or removed for Ghanaian exporters to the sub-region, it successfully organised an ECOWAS Exporters’ Forum in Accra, in 2003 to identify the challenges to trade in ECOWAS sub-region.

* The Ministry assisted Ghanaian Companies to participate in Trade Fairs in Burkina Faso and the ECOWAS Trade Fair in Lome. This was an avenue to showcase made in Ghana and some companies have testified about the demand for their products.

* The Ministry is establishing a National Approval Committee to expedite review of applications of companies to be admitted under the ETLS. The period required for the registration of companies to the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme has been shortened from one-year period to three months.

* The Ministry successfully hosted and participated in the under listed ECOWAS Statutory Meetings:

  * Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 6-7 November, 2003;
  * Launch of SIGOA-TOPS Trade Opportunities Programme, 10th November, 2003;
  * Regional Transport Facilitation, 10-12 November, 2003;
  * ECOWAS Common External Tariff, 12-13 November, 2003;
  * Donors Co-ordination meeting on NEPAD, 14-15 November, 2003;
  * Ministers for Trade and Finance Forum, 17th November, 2003;
  * Energy Commission (Science & Tech.), 21-22 November. 2003;
  * ECOSTAT Steering Committee (Directors of Statistics and European Commission), 1-2 December, 2003;
Inaugural Meeting of ECOSTAT Project (Harmonization of National Accounts) and Price indices, 3-5 December, 2003;

Trade and Customs Commission, 4-6 December, 2003;

28th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Commission, 8-13 December, 2003;

Technical, Monitoring Committee (Monetary Co-operation), 14-15 December, 2003;

51st Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, 15-16 December, 2003;

Committee of Governors of the 2nd West Africa Monetary Zone, 16th December, 2003;

Meeting of the Convergence Council, 17th December, 2003;

Extraordinary Meeting of the Board of Governors of the EBID, 17th December, 2003;


The Ministry has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee, under the Chairmanship of H. E. The Vice President of Ghana, to implement Bilateral Agreements reached between Ghana-Burkina Faso and Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire in October and September, 2003 respectively.

The Ministry has carried out sensitization programmes on the 2nd Monetary Zone (WAMZ). In this connection, a public forum was organized at the University of Ghana and fifteen appearances were made on radio to educate the public on the introduction of the common currency (ECO).