

ECOWAS AT FORTY: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The paper deliberation was on ECOWAS at forty, alongside the successes and challenges. The body has succeeded in the elimination of different barriers to the free movement of persons and goods, restrictions on trade and the harmonisation of economic and sectoral policies. As a matter of fact, the body also succeeded in the setting up of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) for Pilot Operational Zone E, comprising four countries (Benin, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo). The objective of the centre is to monitor the coastal maritime space of West Africa with a view to responding operationally to illicit maritime activities such as oil bunkering, illicit fishing, hostage taking, piracy, illicit waste dumping, among others. The paper stated that the introduction of the ECOWAS travel certificate, adopted in all Member States but being implemented by eight (8) Member States, which are: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The study concluded that huge successes were made by ECOWAS within its forty years of existence. The region has experienced relative improvement in its security situation, even if the situation still calls for vigilance. The threat posed by extremist and armed groups in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria continued to raise uncertainty over the already fragile stability of the Sahel-Saharan and, by extension, the entire region. On the economic level, despite the slowdown in economic growth at a global level, the region experienced robust growth, which stood at 6.2% in 2014. Faced with all the constraints that have hampered the development of regional trade and the regional integration process, the main challenges that ECOWAS must address have to do with the deepening of structural reforms, improving the institutional framework, maintaining macroeconomic stability and harmonising macroeconomic policies, building physical infrastructure and human capital, consolidating the monetary cooperation framework, customs union, agricultural development, and strengthening political stability and social harmony. One of the recommendations made, amongst others, was that Member States should unite against apathy in order to accelerate cooperation and unity. This will foster economic progress and development, particularly through the actualization of common programmes in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, industry, transport and communication, energy, trade, currency and finance, and economic reforms, as well as health, justice, peace, and security.

KEYWORDS: ECOWAS, Successes and Challenges

Introduction

On May 28, 1975, fifteen West African states signed the Treaty of Lagos, establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹ The Treaty represented a milestone in the history of African integration in that it established cohesive trade relations between French and English-speaking African countries. The objective of ECOWAS is to foster economic cooperation and development, especially in the areas of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial matters, and in social and cultural aspects as well.² ECOWAS, from 1993, began to deepen its focus on peace and security as guarantor of economic integration.³

For forty years of existence (1975 - 2015), the peace and security focus notwithstanding, was considered to have met progress amidst several challenges. This was as result of many factors - including the nature of West African states prior to the establishment of the organization. The region went through series of political upheavals and instability, which resulted into spiral of governmental leadership crisis and disunity among the population. At the time of its establishment, exceptional roles were expected from ECOWAS in order to face the lingering problems of the West African sub-region. Generally, issues identified include corruption, autocratic leaders, high level of poverty, ineffective democratic institutions, political instability, low level of education, external influences, interference from colonial masters (imperialism), effect of colonialism, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts are all inherent in West African countries. Amid the challenges, the sub-region was blessed with enormous natural resources but the use of its resources to solve its development challenges became impossible.

For forty years, ECOWAS had to contend with these issues amid its own institutional challenges which it also had to cope with. In evaluating the role of ECOWAS in the sub-region few achievements and failures were identified. This paper is an assessment of its achievements, challenges and prospects of ECOWAS from 1975 to 2015. This assessment will be presented under its dual agenda: regional economic integration and promotion of peace and security.

ECOWAS' Regional Economic Integration: Forty Years Achievements

An appraisal of the 40 years of existence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is considered in a simple progress report that provides an assessment of the impact of activities carried out within the framework of regional economic integration. However, any attempt to discuss the achievements of ECOWAS within its forty years of existence is not yet a complete effort without explaining the forms at which integration can take place economically among the member states. According to Balassa,⁴ there are four stages and forms of economic integration, which includes; Free Trade Area (FTA), Custom Union (CU), Common Market (CM) and lastly Economic Union. Preferential Trade Arrangement (PTAs) has to do with the use of lower tariff barriers among the member states but not with the non-member nations. This is

¹ Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States, May 28, 1975. In Bruce Zagaris, *The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): An Analysis and Prospects*, *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*. Vol. 10, No 1 (1978). Available at: <http://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/jil/vol10/iss1/7>

² *Ibid.*

³ Revised ECOWAS Treaty, *Ibid.*

⁴ B. Balassa, *The Theory of Economic Integration* (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1961).

further explained by Panagariya⁵ as an agreement between the member nations to reduce or eliminate the trade barriers on the goods produced within the member nations than the produced goods within the non-member nations. And PTAs has been described to be synonymous with FTAs and CUs.

In the beginning, the regional integration process in West Africa had two major objectives. The first was to promote cooperation among Member States, through the elimination of different barriers to the free movement of persons and goods, restrictions to trade and the harmonization of economic and sectoral policies.⁶ The second objective was economic progress and development particularly through the actualization of common programmes in the area of agriculture and natural resources, industry, transport and communication, energy, trade, currency and finance, and economic reforms, as well as health, justice, peace and security.⁷

In view of these objectives, it appeared that the regional integration initiatives were hinged on the creation of a common market and economic union. Moreover, three major phases can be identified in the implementation of the major integration efforts. First from 1975 to 1993, there was the adoption of measures to remove obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods and services and capital among Member States as well as to grant rights of residence and establishment. Second, from 1994 to the end of 2004, there was the adoption of the peace and security instruments and the implementation of economic and institutional reforms; and thirdly, from 2005 to 2015, key activities aimed at the completion of significant programmes and sector projects were initiated.⁸ Forty years of ECOWAS can be assessed in line with these objectives notwithstanding the security issues encountered from the 1990s, marked by several conflicts in the region.

The first eighteen years (1975-1993) of the liberalization process in West Africa was mainly marked by actions in favour of the free movement of persons within the ECOWAS and trade liberalization through the elimination of customs duty on imports and exports of goods among Member States, and the elimination of non-tariff barriers with a view to creating a free trade area within the Community. The protocol A/P1/5/79 on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment, signed in May 1979 and entered into force in April 1980. This protocol enshrined, very early, the will for an integrated region and a community citizenship. Protocol A/P3/5/82 relating to the definition of Community Citizen, which entered into force in July 1984, is clear proof of this achievement. Furthermore, Article 12 of the Lagos Treaty stipulates that: "there shall be progressively established, a Customs Union among the Member States that will cover all trade in goods."⁹ The treaty therefore projects the gradual elimination of all hindrances to trade among member countries of the ECOWAS.¹⁰

From 1994 to 2004 witnessed another tremendous achievement. The Revised ECOWAS treaty signed in July 1993 enshrined and allowed for emphasis on certain objectives such as the

⁵ A. Panagariya, *The regionalism debate: An overview* (University of Maryland, 1998), p. 2.

⁶ Sylvia Mwintome Soliku, *Globalization and Regional Integration in Africa: An Assessment of ECOWAS, A Master Dissertation*, University of Ghana, Legon, July 2013.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Sylvia Mwintome Soliku, *Globalization and Regional Integration in Africa: An Assessment of ECOWAS*,

creation and actualization of an economic and monetary union (section IX) and cooperation in the area of political affairs, and regional security (section X). The post-Revised Treaty-period was mainly marked by the adoption of the peacekeeping and security instruments. The period also witnessed the establishment of key economic and institutional reforms, following the emergence of crises in the region that were at the same time economic, political as well as social, and led to civil wars. There was also the stated objective to create an ECOWAS single currency, initially slated for January 2003.¹¹

This period was also marked by significant reforms especially with the creation and establishment of certain organs and institutions for integration. They include: (i) the Community Parliament (Protocol A/P2/8/94, entered into force 14/03/2000), (ii) the Community Court of Justice (Protocol A/P1/7/91, entered into force 5/11/1996), (iii) the West Africa Monetary Agency (Protocol A/P1/7/93, entered into force 1/08/1995), (iv) the institution of the Community Levy (Protocol A/P7/96, which entered into force 4/01/2000, a significant provision for the financial autonomy of ECOWAS institutions, (v) the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID, Protocol A/P2/12/01, which entered into force 10/08/2004), key institution for financing the economies.¹² Consolidation of the institutional arrangement helped to further ensure justice, transparency, good governance while ensuring increased commitment from the different stakeholders involved in the actualization of the final objective of regional integration.

Faced with economic crises of the 1980s and the limitations of the structural adjustment programmes engineered by the Breton Wood Institutions, regional integration efforts appeared to be a solution to the structural problems that the member states were unable to address independently. As a result, there were reforms undertaken at community level which aimed at waiving certain structural constraints of the economies, and had to do specifically with macroeconomic management, industry, mining, transport and agriculture.¹³ Also, as regards the Monetary Union, measures for the harmonization of macroeconomic policies were put in place. The resulting economic convergence provision, adopted by Decision A/DEC.7/12/99 of 10 December 1999, targeted at: (i) harmonious growth in per capita income, (ii) strengthening of the macroeconomic framework, (iii) building up of solid financial systems to enable their increased involvement in financing the economies, and (iv) enhancing private sector support mechanisms.¹⁴

The period between 2005 and 2015 witnessed the adoption of various common economic and sector policies and programmes as well as the harmonization and coordination of national policies, as stipulated in Article 3,2 of the Revised Treaty was one crucial step towards the common market and economic union. These policies include: (i) harmonization and coordination of policies aimed at protecting the environment; (ii) the adoption of measures aimed at promoting private sector integration, including the creation of a favourable environment for promoting small and medium-scale enterprises ; (iii) the promotion of joint ventures by private sector organizations and other economic operators including the conclusion

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

of a regional agreement on cross-border investments; (iv) the establishment of a favourable legal environment; (v) the harmonization of national investment codes culminating in the adoption of a single community investment code; and (vi) the harmonization of standards and measures.¹⁵

To effectively actualize this objective that seemed to be a prerequisite to the consolidation of the ECOWAS mission, the Community's Governing Body decided, in 2006, to enhance the role of the Executive Secretariat by transforming it into a Commission. Over the past decade, a number of policies, programmes, projects were adopted, implemented.

Assessment in Relation to the Objective of Creating a Common Market

Within the framework of the common market objective, the emphasis is on the following efforts:

(a) Free movement of persons: This is one of the great achievements and may be labelled a significant success for the following reasons:

- ECOWAS is the only region in Africa where, since 1980, Member States have not required visas from its citizens (in comparison, even if unnecessary, it was only in 2005 that the Schengen Agreement of the European Union entered into force).
- A community identity exists (travel document and ECOWAS passport): nationals enjoy a right of residence and access to jobs.
- The introduction of the ECOWAS travel certificate, adopted in all Member States, but being implemented by eight (8) Member States which are: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo.
- The introduction of harmonized immigration forms: a measure adopted by all Member States except Liberia.
- The introduction of the brown insurance card: adopted by all countries except Cape Verde; and,
- The introduction of laws on the Right of establishment and residence: the legal bases for the right of residence and establishment have been established. And in several cases, these rights have been implemented.¹⁶

However, there are still significant obstacles to the free movement of persons, resulting, for instance, in: the selective implementation of the Protocol on free movement and related relevant texts, (ii) the proliferation of unauthorized road blocks; (iii). Harassment at border crossings, and (iv) the Community citizens and security agents not properly informed on the rights set out in the Protocol on free movement.

¹⁵ A. Essien A Record of Regional Integration in West Africa: Regional Integration Observer. *Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI)*. Vol 1 No. 2 (2013), pp. 1-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

(b) Liberalization of trade: As regards the liberalization of trade, some progress can be noted. The creation of the Free Trade Area (FTA), has given rise to the establishment of a ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), a Protocol on Interstate Road Transit (ISRT) and a transit operations guarantee scheme. However, in the area of trade liberalization, the expected results are still far from being achieved. The implementation of the ETLS has not brought about the creation or diversion of trade within the region. The following reasons explain this under-performance:

- Most of the countries, as part of the ETLS, eliminated tariff barriers on raw materials but very few did same on industrial products,
- the language barrier (non-translated documents) and the absence of community standards, coupled with the will of some States to protect their producers; and
- the lack of an adapted jurisdictional provision further complicates the resolution of disputes. The court of justice is empowered to resolve issues of blocked products. However, ECOWAS has no court of arbitration. Moreover, the gaps in the free movement of goods are as a result of the ineffectiveness of the customs union which entered into force in January 2015.¹⁷

(c) ECOWAS Common External Tariff (ECOWAS-CET)

As an important and decisive stage in the creation of the customs union and the deepening of economic integration in the region, the ECOWAS-CET was adopted in October 2013 with six key regulations and entered into force in January 2015. The ECOWAS-CET helped to expedite certain developments in key strategic sectors of the region.

Assessment in Relation to the Objective of Harmonization of Policies and the Promotion of Common Programmes

In general, there is less progress in the area of common policies and programmes. Despite the adoption of several policy and programme harmonization frameworks, the situation was still bleak in terms of the areas of intervention. Analysis of the following four programmes provided an assessment of the very partial actualization of these efforts and the job that still needed to be done.

(a) Harmonization of macroeconomic policies: Within this framework, a multilateral surveillance mechanism was adopted to ensure an evolution of some key macroeconomic indicators tend towards set targets (convergence criteria). This goal suggested that the convergence of all countries towards these criteria is necessary, though incapable of ensuring optimal monetary union. The mechanism, in relation to budgetary, financial and monetary integration, did not always help in the harmonious evolution of the region's economies.

(b) ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP): The ECOWAP, adopted in January 2005, was the sub-regional component of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). The programme aimed to ensure food security for the people of West Africa; reduce food dependency by becoming self-sufficient; open the markets to producers; create an income

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

generating employment capable of improving standard of living in rural areas and the provision of services to rural dwellers; ensure that the systems of productions were sustainable; reduce the vulnerability of West African economies by tackling instability and security factors; and adopt an appropriate funding mechanism.

To achieve these objectives, several actions were carried out, such as:

- National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIP);
- Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (PRIA);
- Creation of instruments specially for increasing production and agricultural productivity;
- Regional Agency for Agricultural Resilience (ARRA);
- Regional Food Bank; and
- Regional Support Programme for the sustainable development of rice farming in West Africa with the assumption that the region will be self-sufficient in rice by 2025.¹⁸

However, the issue of food security remained a major challenge that regional authorities were paying close attention to. More demonstrations against food shortage and the high cost of living in many countries of the region were indicative of the magnitude of the problem.

(c) Infrastructure Programmes: To increase trade and investment, the ECOWAS implemented transit and transport facilitation programmes. However, the results were poor, as West Africa's infrastructural deficit remained evident. For example, although more than 90% of the transportation of cargo and passengers were by road, the countries of the ECOWAS region remained ill-equipped in terms of road infrastructures. In effect the region was only approximately 4.7 km of road to every 100 km² compared to an average of 6.8 km for the African continent.

(d) Energy Policy: In order to address the significant energy challenge of the region, ECOWAS proceeded to:

- adopt a regional policy on energy;
- create a Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency;
- create the West African Power Pool (WAPP);
- create the West Africa Gas Pipeline. Having started operations in 1982 and attracted much hope, and having led to the signing of several intergovernmental agreements, this project was not fully operational because of the insufficient gas supply. Yet 70% of the installations were completed;
- The creation, in 2008, of a Regional Regulatory Authority (ERERA).¹⁹

Despite all of these initiatives and the region's enormous energy potential - 30% of the proven crude oil reserves (3,017 million tonnes) and 3,581 million m³ of natural gas, 31% of proven

¹⁸ A. Essien A Record of Regional Integration in West Africa: Regional Integration Observer.

¹⁹ P. Alamayehu and T. Haile, Regional Economic Integration in Africa: A Review of Problems and Prospects with a Case Study of COMESA.

reserves of the continent, to which we must add a hydroelectric potential estimated at 23,900 MW and the opportunities for developing solar and wind energy - major difficulties facing this sector were tied to the poor production capacity as well as the run-down distribution infrastructure. Less than 30% of the population had direct access to electricity of which only 6% in rural areas.²⁰

Assessment in Relation to Economic Performance

The evaluation of activities of ECOWAS Institutions may equally be considered from the angle of economic performance even if such an exercise is in reality quite complex. A brief analysis of the status of intra-regional trade as well as the overall activity is, in some respects, a means to draw lessons regarding the impact of the integration process on the economic and social progress.

(a) Trade Performance: There were no accurate and detailed statistics with which to measure the influence of the free movement of goods in intra-Community trade. In fact, the statistics does not contain significant border trade. On the whole, though relatively low compared to the total trade, intra-regional trade was on the increase. Since 1980, with the entry into force of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), initially on agricultural products and handicrafts, and subsequently extended in 1990 to include manufactured products of origin, the region witnessed a rise in intra-ECOWAS trade.

(b) Macroeconomic Performance: The creation of ECOWAS occurred during the economic slowdown of the mid 1970s, that was the results of worsening trade terms and debt crisis. The average growth of the region, set at 5.2% during the period from 1960 to 1970, dropped to 3.6% from 1970-1980. The proposed solution to address the crisis was the application of the Washington agreement through the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) aimed at integrating the African countries into the global market. The consequences of these measures were well known and economic activity worsened: the average growth rate dropped to 1.7% between 1980 and 1990.²¹ From the mid-1990s, the overall economic situation in West Africa improved, with an increasing growth rate. The growth rate increased to 3% between 1990 and 2005. However, over the last decade, it recorded 6% on average with projections up to 2025 fixed at below 5%.²²

This significant improvement in the macroeconomic situation since the 1990s, as shown by macroeconomic indicators were renewed growth; better management of economic imbalances and inflation; increased external assets that is certainly due to the improved foreign environment with good commodity pricing of agricultural products, minerals and energy resources due to strong pressure from emerging economies and the broadening of possibilities for funding, such as the debt cancellation under the HIPC initiative, and the reforms undertaken by the States. The role of Regional Integration Organizations, like the ECOWAS, cannot be overlooked in this positive move. The reasons outlined above helped to ensure:

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ P. Alamayehu and T. Haile, Regional Economic Integration in Africa: A Review of Problems and Prospects with a Case Study of COMESA.

²² *Ibid.*

- Improvement to the economic environment through peace-building and security as well as democratic West African political institutions;
- Development of new community programmes better suited to the needs of the people, with a broadened scope of application;
- Trade opening that enables Member States to enjoy opportunities being offered by a vast regional market; and
- Regional solidarity.²³

Despite ECOWAS' efforts towards the consolidation of regional integration, a number of challenges existed within the period under review. For instance, West Africa remained marginalized in international trade and trade among Member States was still emerging. Factors explaining this slow pace were: (i) the poor diversification and transformation of raw materials, due to the extreme structural rigidity of economies in the region, (ii) the high cost of factors of production (iii) the inadequate complementarity between national economies (iv) poor infrastructure, particularly transport and energy, as well as (v) poor implementation of economic integration solutions (an often vague application of certain agreements and protocols). In addition to the aforementioned, were gaps in the business environment, constraints from the foreign environment, such as the protectionist practices restricting regional products' access to the markets of developed countries and subsidies and grants to producers of these countries.

ECOWAS' Regional Peace and Security Programmes: Forty Years Achievements

The primary objectives of creating ECOWAS were basically to accelerate economic and social development in West Africa. However, with the understanding that no better development can be achieved without peaceful atmosphere, peace and security initiatives were undertaken by ECOWAS to facilitate the development process.

The assessment of ECOWAS peace and security programmer will be discussed under the following sub-headings.

i Political Affairs

In line with the mandate of the Commission to enhance cooperation with relevant multilateral organizations on peace and stability in West Africa, ECOWAS participated at the U.N General Assembly and the African Union Summit, and held meetings on the margins of the Assembly and the Summit with relevant institutions on how to jointly resolve political crises in a number of Member States. Also, in line with the efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region, ECOWAS, in conjunction with the other members of the International Follow-Up and Support Group on Burkina Faso (GISAT-BF), held meetings on the political crisis in Burkina Faso.²⁴ In response to the political developments in Guinea Bissau and on the pre-election situation in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, two Extraordinary Sessions of the ECOWAS Authority of

²³ A. Essien A Record of Regional Integration in West Africa: Regional Integration Observer.

²⁴ J. W. Ansah, The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side.

Heads of State and Government were held in Senegal and Nigeria respectively on 12 and 22 September 2015.²⁵

ii. Review of Protocols

In line with the instructions of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State, ECOWAS, in collaboration with regional experts, undertook a review of the ECOWAS Legal Texts on the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999, and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The recommendations on the Texts was reviewed and decided upon by the Authority at its next Ordinary Session, scheduled at the end of 2015.²⁶

iii. Mediation Facilitation

The Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD) was operationalized in June 2015 with the recruitment of Staff to backstop mediation efforts of ECOWAS. From 18 to 25 July 2015, the Commission backstopped the High-Level Solidarity and Information Mission to the Republic of Guinea to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment conducive for holding the 11 October 2015 Presidential elections.²⁷ Furthermore, the Commission held a Technical Meeting on ECOWAS Mediation Roster and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from 3 to 6 August 2015 to deliberate upon and evaluate the best procedures and methodology to build a Mediation roster and database of potential mediators and resources in the region and strategize on developing a Standard Operating Procedure to guide the work of the Division and ECOWAS Mediators.²⁸ The Commission was also involved in the fact-finding Mission to Niger from 2 to 11 October 2015 as part of efforts to resolve political disputes over the 2016 election timetable and disagreements over the voter register.²⁹

iv. Human Rights Monitoring

Also, a Network of Civil Society Organization Human Rights Monitors (NCSOHRM) was established to enhance the promotion and respect of rule of law and human rights in Member States. NCSOHRM had amongst its key responsibilities the mandate to produce a report on a yearly basis on the state and status of human rights protection in the ECOWAS region. In addition, key human rights stakeholders in the region, namely the Network National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa (NNHRI), and NCSOHRM agreed to mark an ECOWAS Human Rights Day.³⁰ In the bid to further broaden the space of improving the capacities of the regional stakeholders in participatory democracy, three (3) training modules on Political Party Financing Internal Party Democracy and Administrative Setting Programme and Campaign financing were adopted and validated. The modules were used for the training of political parties in the region.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ A. Essien A Record of Regional Integration in West Africa: Regional Integration Observer.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ N. Bamfo, The Political and Security Challenges Facing 'ECOWAS' in the Twenty-first Century: Testing the Limits of an Organization's Reputation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 3 No. 3 (2013), pp. 12-21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ J. W. Ansah, The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side.

v. ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

In 2015, the Secretariat of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) was constituted. The Internal Steering Committee (ISC) of the ECPF convened a meeting on 14 August 2015 for the purpose of consolidating ownership of the ECPF by the relevant ECOWAS Directorates. Other issues discussed at the meeting focused on the role played by the ECPF Focal Points in the operationalization of the ECPF at the Directorate level using the ECPF Reporting Template; the finalizing the ECPF Web Portal by the ECPF Secretariat, and the need for the EU-ECOWAS PSS Project Support Unit to work in close cooperation with ECPF Secretariat and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. The Commission also organized a Civil Society Organization (CSO) Sensitization Workshop on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) in Member States in Accra on 19 and 20 August, 2015, for the purpose of understanding and implementing the ECPF at multi-dimensional levels with key actors such as ECOWAS, Member States, Civil Society Organizations and Development Partners.

Key outcomes of the meeting included an agreement that CSOs played a greater role in the prevention of conflicts in Member States; an agreement on the need for CSOs to make a more meaningful impact in terms of conflict prevention initiatives through its partnership with the State, and an acknowledgement of the importance of continued collaboration and coordination between regional and national level initiatives. The meeting also identified lead institutions and other CSOs for collaboration at the national level in the implementation of the ECPF.

vi. Election Monitoring

Pursuant to the provisions of Article 12 of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; Article 53 (c) of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework; and the decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government to deploy timely pre-election missions to Member States organizing elections, the Commission provided Electoral Assistance packages in the preparation of these elections. The series of elections planned for 2015 started on a very positive note with elections held in Nigeria, Togo, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

In facilitating the provision of electoral assistance packages to these Member States, the Commission deployed: Pre-election fact-finding missions, Long Term Observation/Situation Room and Election Observation missions to cover all aspects of the electoral process in these countries. For Niger, a Technical Mission comprising a voter registration and mediation expert was deployed to the country to facilitate preparatory activities for the coming year. ECOWAS, on the margin of the ECONEC Annual General Assembly meeting, reviewed electoral processes in the region and strengthened the Electoral Commission networks to better prepare them for the challenging elections planned for the coming year in Niger, Benin, Cabo Verde, The Gambia and Ghana.³¹

vii. Peace Support Operations

- (a) **ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF):** During the period under review, the ESF initiated the review of some of its strategic documents due to the changing realities as well as emerging challenges in the region. These documents include the ESF Doctrine,

³¹ J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side*.

Operational Framework and SOPs for the ESF, Proposed ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Doctrine, ESF Logistics Concept and Force Generation Policy Guidelines. The ESF conducted the Contingent – Owned Equipment Inspection in Guinea Bissau from 24 to 27 March 2015 with the objective of ascertaining the availability and serviceability of equipment used by deployed troops.³² The ESF also participated in Exercise Western Accord 15 from 20 to 31 July 2015 and Exercise Amani Africa II from 19 October to 06 November 2015. A Peace Support Operation Planning Course was conducted from 13 to 24 April 2015 in Abuja, Nigeria. The 35th Ordinary meeting of the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) was held in Dakar, Senegal from 9 to 11 September 2015.³³

- (b) **Police Component:** The Police Planning Element of the ESF conducted a workshop in Abuja from 25 to 27 March 2015 to validate the findings of the Training Needs Assessment Exercise that was carried out on Police personnel from 2013 -2014.³⁴ This activity was significant as the Police training experts from ECOWAS Member States and Training Centres of Excellence outlined a Training Plan which informed the commencement of Training of the Police Component of the ESF, a Middle Level Management Course, to be organized at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra in April 2016.³⁵
- (c) **Civilian Component:** As part of the Integrated Planning Element of the ECOWAS Standby Force, the Civilian Component conducted key activities, namely the creation of a Web Page for ECOWAS Civilian Standby Roster, the recruitment of a consultant to conceptualize a database in support of the Civilian Standby Roster and the recruitment of a consultant to develop a Human Resources Policy Framework for the deployment of Civilians in ECOWAS Peace Support Operations. With a view to strengthening the networking and coordination of the Civilian Dimension activities throughout the region, focal points were identified at the Civil Society Organizations' level. Identification of the focal points at the level of government is in progress.³⁶

viii. Small Arms

With respect to Small Arms, the Commission continued implementation of the 5-Year Priority Activity Plan, the implementation framework for the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, with focus on capacity building and management of the Exemption Procedure. As enshrined in the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the Commission began the process of deepening the promotion of confidence building among Member States and public transparency on arms transfer. In this light, a meeting of Database Experts was convened at which the modalities and

³² J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side*.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side*.

methodologies for the establishment and maintenance of the ECOWAS Database and Register on SALW were agreed upon.³⁷

At the Annual Meeting of the National Commission on SALW held in June 2015, the Commission Member States were apprised on modern strategies on SALW control. The meeting also served as a platform for capacity building, peer review, experience sharing and enhancement of coordination of efforts on SALW control in the region. In the same vein, the Commission provided support for Annual Forum for the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) for cross border collaboration, exchange of experiences and synergy by CSOs in the fight against proliferation of SALW in the region.³⁸

The implementation of the Exemption Procedures to the ECOWAS Convention on SALW continued with the provision of strategic training for national security officers in charge of the management of the exemption process in Nigeria and Niger in August and September 2015 respectively. In all, a total of one hundred and forty (140) officers were trained on the effective management of the Exemption Procedure of the ECOWAS Convention on SALW in their respective countries.³⁹ Furthermore, the Commission collaborated with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) to promote the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) alongside the ECOWAS Convention on SALW.⁴⁰ Member States were exposed to the synergies and complementarities among the ATT, the UNPOA and the ECOWAS Convention on SALW as well as their implications for national institutional arrangements and national arms control systems.

ix. Regional Security

A major activity undertaken by the Commission in the area of regional security was the setting up of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) for Pilot Operational Zone E, comprising four countries (Benin, Niger, Nigeria and Togo), in accordance with the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy (EIMS) adopted by Heads of States and Government in March, 2014 at Yamoussokoro, Cote d'Ivoire which provides for the for the creation of Maritime Operational Zones E, F and G and a Regional Maritime Coordination Centre (RMCC) to coordinate the activities of the 3 Zones.⁴¹ The objective of the Centre is to monitor the coastal Maritime space of West Africa with a view to responding, operationally, to illicit maritime activities such as oil bunkering, illicit fishing, hostage taking, piracy, illicit waste dumping, among others.

In addition, the Commission undertook technical assessment missions to Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire (4 to 8 March 2015) and Calabar, Nigeria (14 to 17 March, 2015) to inspect proposed facilities by the two countries which had indicated interest to host the Regional Maritime Coordination Centre RMCC.⁴² A similar mission was undertaken in June to Accra, to evaluate

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ D. C. Bach, 'The Politics of West African Economic Cooperation: CEAO and ECOWAS,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1983), pp. 605-623

⁴² J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side.*

the preparedness of Ghana to host the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre.⁴³ With respect to the fight against transnational organized crime, the Commission organized a meeting of the Sub-Committee for Training and Operations of the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) in Niamey as well as the 4th Training on Regional Transnational Organized Crime Training for Law Enforcement Agents in West Africa in Abidjan, training in national counter-terrorism was conducted for the same agents in August 2015. These training programmes contributed to strengthening the capacities of Law Enforcement Agents in the region to fight transnational organized crime.

x. Early Warning

The Commission's activities in the area of Early Warning centred on the implementation of two main projects - the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism (NEWRM) and the Street Children Project. Following the adoption of the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism framework by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in July 2014, and subsequent pledge by the US Government to support the project, the Commission initiated project implementation by conducting advocacy visits to Member States to engage the government and key stakeholders on the modalities for setting up National Centres for the coordination of response mechanisms. The first phase of the visits was to five of the six countries where the President of ECOWAS Commission had Special Representatives, namely Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso and Liberia.⁴⁴ The main objectives of the advocacy visits were:

- To inform the Government and relevant Ministers of the background and context that led to ECOWAS' advocacy for the deployment of NEWRM at Member States level and the role they need play to ensure effective national ownership of the processes;
- To exchange views with key stakeholders on the administrative modalities for establishing NEWRM, specific to each Member State;
- To expound on ECOWAS and other partners' Technical and Financial support for the establishment of NEWRM at the initial phase of the project before effective transfer of such responsibilities to the Member States.⁴⁵

The Street Children project, which was conceived by the results of studies carried out on risks and vulnerabilities, was intended to support the eradication of the syndrome of children on the streets in the ECOWAS region. The project aimed at defining a strategy for dealing with the phenomenon by employing a multipronged, holistic approach with strong systems and support structures, enforcing existing legislation on child protection, child labour and trafficking and enacting new legislation where necessary.

To launch the project, a meeting was organized from 22 to 24 in June 2015 in Dakar to draw up strategies for the implementation of the project. Among the recommendations made at the meeting was the creation of a legal instrument along the lines of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapted to local socio-cultural conditions or circumstances. The

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ D. C. Bach, 'The Politics of West African Economic Cooperation: CEAO and ECOWAS.'

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

meeting also emphasized the need for a legally-binding instrument to further strengthen commitment of Member States to end the plight of young children living on the streets.

xi. ECOWAS Peace Fund

The activities carried out by the ECOWAS Peace Fund fall under four headings: i) Core Peace Fund; ii) European Union Support to ECOWAS Regional Peace, Security and Stability mandate project (EU-ECOWAS PSS); iii) Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Support Programme; iv) Project Support to Training Institutions.

(a) **Core Peace Fund:** Under the Core Peace Fund (annual allocation of funds from the Community Levy), the following activities were implemented: assessment of projects submitted to the ECOWAS Peace Fund for funding by the Project Review and Approval Committee; organization of a visibility workshop which defined a visibility scheme and tools to support the Peace Fund; improvement of the EPF website (ie. www.peacefund.ecowas.int) and; support and funding for the Forum on the education on the culture of peace through the inter and intra-religious dialogue.⁴⁶

(b) **ECOWAS Regional Peace, Security and Stability Mandate Project (EU-ECOWAS/PSS):** Implementation of the European Union support to ECOWAS Regional Peace, Security and Stability Mandate Project (EU-ECOWAS/PSS) formally started in 2015 and was intended to run for a period of four (4) years. The main objective of the project, with a total estimated cost of € 29.3m, was to strengthen ECOWAS' conflict prevention and resolution mandate to support regional stability, with a shift from a reactive to a preventive mode in terms of conflict mitigation and prevention. The project envisages two main results:

- Strengthened ECOWAS Commission institutional capacities in conflict prevention and resolution at Regional and National Level, mainly the Department for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) and the ECOWAS Peace Fund (EPF);
- Enhanced implementation of selected components of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF).

ECOWAS Regional Peace and Security Programmes: Challenges and Prospects

Despite progress made in terms of peace and security, uncertainty and anxiety still existed and the situation remained fragile in some countries, especially with the increasing rate of terrorism. There was therefore need to intensify efforts to maintain this momentum and address the gaps identified from the experience. Apparently, there were different security obstacles which militated against the organization from achieving its stated objectives, which gave rise to the need of removing security-related obstacles. Collective security arrangement, which has to do with collective military intervention and sanction unconstitutional changes of government. This required ECOWAS members to submit part of their sovereign powers and territorial integrity to the organization to reform them for general purpose. ECOWAS members would not literally wish to allow any threat to their sovereignty but due to transnational challenges facing the sub-

⁴⁶ J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side*.

region like high incidence of diseases (malaria and HIV/AIDS), various forms of trans-border crime like proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) including drugs and extensive human trafficking. Members of ECOWAS preferred to tackle these problems collectively.⁴⁷

The prevalence of regional challenges led to the need for regional security and peace initiatives. A state is not secured when her neighbouring states are in crisis, so securing peace within political boundary of a state necessitates ensuring peace at the regional level as well. The decision to address issues of transnational crisis collectively by ECOWAS was considered to have developed a long period of time in the history of the organization. The role that regional security culture, the role of shared ideas, norms and ways of thinking about certain issues as security threats played in the foreign and security policies of ECOWAS and its member states was significant here.⁴⁸

The debate about transnational challenges in West Africa is not new and this gained a vivid attention of ECOWAS. West Africa states were inherent with harsh economic and social conditions, widespread corruption, intra and inter-state conflicts, porous borders, maladministration, culture of impunity that gave room for the development of criminal practices as well as the relevance position of West African countries in international criminal ventures. West Africa region had some of the lowest standards of living in the world. "Thirteen out of the fifteen members of ECOWAS were among the last 30 bottom-listed countries in the UNDP Human Development index of 2006."⁴⁹ Inequality in the distribution of national wealth, and unchecked demographic growth, which led to overpopulation were the conditions that made the region attractive to transnational challenges.⁵⁰ Within the period under review, the basic transnational challenges featuring on ECOWAS agenda were problems of cross-border insurgencies, health challenges and organized criminal activities. And other challenges with less attention of ECOWAS were terrorism and environmental degradation.⁵¹

Conclusion

There are so many things to consider when examining how successful ECOWAS was in the sub-region and the various challenges facing the organisation and the sub-region within the period under review (1975–2015). Looking at the conditions of the sub-region prior to the creation of ECOWAS, it was considered complex and full of possibilities and difficulties. It was one of the poorest regions in the world and the majority of its population lived in poverty. It was among the most indebted as well as most unstable regions with the prevalence of constant internal conflicts, protracted civil wars, interstate conflicts, coup d'états, corruption, and political mal-administrations. Antidemocratic behaviour, militarization, domination of elites, child soldiers, and different forms of oppression were all endemic features of the sub-region. Nonetheless, the West African countries were endowed with a wealth of natural resources that could be used for the betterment of over 235 million people living in the region. Except for Cape Verde, Gambia,

⁴⁷ J. W. Ansah, *The Political Dynamics of Regional Integration in Africa: The Subjective Side.*, p. 56

⁴⁸ T. Jaye, D. Garuba, and S. Amadi, Introduction. In: Jaye, T and Amadi, S (eds.) *ECOWAS and The Dynamics of Conflict and Peacebuilding*. (Dakar, Senegal: Consortium for Development Partnership (CDP), 2011). p. 1–7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

and Guinea Bissau, all of the countries of West Africa have a variety of natural resources. Gold, diamonds, oil, uranium, natural gas, copper, and iron ore are some examples of what can be found in West Africa. Despite these challenges, huge successes were made by ECOWAS within its forty years of existence. The region experienced relative improvement in its security situation, even if the situation still called for vigilance. The threat posed by extremist and armed groups in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria continued to raise uncertainty over the already fragile stability of the Sahel-Saharan and, by extension, the entire region. On the economic level, despite the slowdown in economic growth at a global level, the region experienced robust growth, which stood at 6.2% in 2014. Faced with all the constraints that have hampered the development of regional trade and the regional integration process, the main challenges that ECOWAS must address have to do with the deepening of structural reforms, improving the institutional framework, maintaining macroeconomic stability and harmonising macroeconomic policies, building physical infrastructure and human capital, consolidating the monetary cooperation framework, customs union, agricultural development, and strengthening political stability and social harmony.

Recommendations

1. The Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) should not relent but effectively continue to monitor the coastal Maritime space of West Africa with a view to responding, operationally, to illicit maritime activities such as oil bunkering, illicit fishing, hostage taking, piracy, illicit waste dumping, among others.
2. It is very pertinent for member States should unite against apathy in order to accelerate cooperation and unity. This will foster economic progress and development, particularly through the actualization of common programmes in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, industry, transport and communication, energy, trade, currency and finance, and economic reforms, as well as health, justice, peace, and security.
3. Amid the challenges faced by the sub-region such as corruption, autocratic leaders, high level of poverty etc, the Economic Community of West African States should not hesitate to deliberate on the strategic means to consolidate the Member States for effective collaboration.