



COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE

PRESS RELEASE

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ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DELIBERATE ON MEASURES TO IMPROVE REGIONAL INTEGRATION

The Council of Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deliberated on various socio-economic and political issues aimed at integrating the region during their 81st Ordinary session which ended on 15th December 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria.

The Chair of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and Nigeria's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama in his remarks at the close of the session expressed his optimism with the recommendations of the Council, who he commended for a thorough and critical analysis of issues concerning the Member States.

The Ministers reviewed the presentation of ECOWAS 2018 annual report which outlined recent socio-economic developments worldwide and in West Africa as well as the status of implementation of Community Institutions.

The Council noted that ECOWAS economic growth is expected to reach 3.0% for 2018 as opposed to 2.3% in 2017. This improved growth is mainly due to the economic recovery of Nigeria and other countries in the Community.

The Ministers further noted that Community work programmes had witnessed substantial progress especially in the areas of economic and political integration, the acceleration of the region's monetary integration, the consolidation of the free movement of people, goods and services and the construction of interconnection infrastructure in West Africa.

Upon an in-depth review of the financial situation of the Community, the Ministers urged all Member States to fully and unconditionally comply with the Community Levy Protocol through its full application with respect to the tax base, collection and deposit of levy proceeds.

In regards to the report of the Auditor General of ECOWAS Institutions which was also presented to the Council, the Ministers recommended that the Commission's Management should oversee a transparent, comprehensive and rigorous forensic audit as well as ensure gender parity through policies and geographic distribution.

Furthermore, the revised financial regulations, new procurement code and the new grant code were approved by the Ministers taking into account amendments made by ECOWAS Administration and Finance Committee (AFC).

The Council also adopted the recommendations of the AFC concerning the Memorandum on the ECOWAS logistics depot in Lungi, the ECOWAS post 2020 vision, the ECOWAS Regional Stabilization and Development fund, the allowances of the speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament and other parliamentarians and the organizational chart of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA).

They also reaffirmed their support for the task force of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and to its proposal of innovative and vigorous actions in order to sustainably eliminate barriers to intra-regional trade.

After examining the presentation of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on the construction of the headquarters of Community Institutions, the Council adopted its report which recommended a company to design the new headquarters taking into account several elements such as the integration of the West African culture into its final design and the potential of expansion to ensure that the building withstands the test of time.

In addition, the council took note of the institutional reform process, the implementation of the legal review project and adopted the memorandum on the return of cultural artefacts to Africa.

Mr. Onyema thanked the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou for the strides the Commission has taken to fulfil its mandate.