

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)

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Introduction

ECOWAS is a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975. Its mission is to promote economic integration in “all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters”

The Institutions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are as follows:

The Commission, The Community Parliament, The Community Court of Justice, and ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID).

The ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, more often called The Fund are its two main institutions designed to implement policies, pursue a number of programmes and carry out development projects in Member States. Such projects include intra-community road construction and telecommunications; and agricultural, energy and water resources development.

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

The ECPF is intended as follows:

A comprehensive operational conflict prevention and peace-building strategy that enables the ECOWAS system and Member States to draw upon human and financial resources at the regional (including civil society and the private sector) and international levels in their efforts to creatively transform conflict.

A guide for enhancing cohesion and synergy between relevant ECOWAS departments on conflict prevention initiatives in order to maximize outcomes and ensure a more active and operational posture on conflict prevention and sustained post-conflict reconstruction from the ECOWAS system and its Member States. Within the ECOWAS Commission, it is primarily the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) that bears primary responsibility for operational conflict prevention policy and initiatives.

A reference for developing process-based cooperation with regional and international stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, African RECs, the AU and UN systems, as well as development partners, on conflict prevention and peace-building around concrete interventions.

The overall aim of the ECPF is to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa. The intermediate purpose is to create space within the ECOWAS system and in Member States for cooperative interaction within the region and with external partners to push conflict prevention and peace-building up the political agenda of Member States in a manner that will trigger timely and targeted multi-actor and multi-dimensional action to defuse or eliminate potential and real threats to human security in a predictable and institutional manner.

The ECPF sets the following objectives:

- Mainstream conflict prevention into ECOWAS' policies and programs as an operational mechanism.
- Increase understanding of the conceptual basis of conflict prevention, and in so doing, interrelate conflict prevention activities with development and humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness.
- Build awareness and anticipation, and strengthen capacity within Member States and civil society to enhance their role as principal constituencies and actors in conflict prevention and peace-building.
- Increase understanding of opportunities, tools and resources related to conflict prevention and peace-building at technical and political levels within Member States, the ECOWAS system and beyond.
- Increase awareness and preparedness for cooperative ventures between ECOWAS, Member States, civil society and external constituencies (RECs, AU, EU, UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development / humanitarian agencies) in pursuit of conflict prevention and peace-building.
- Strengthen capacity within ECOWAS to pursue concrete and integrated conflict prevention and peace-building facilitation, and concomitant activities

such as development and humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness, in Member States using existing resources, such as the Departments of the Commission; the Early Warning System; supporting organs of the Mechanism, including the Council of the Wise and Special Mediators; and other ECOWAS institutions.

- Enhance ECOWAS anticipation and planning capabilities in relation to regional tensions.

- Extend opportunities for conflict prevention to post-conflict environments through targeted restructuring of political governance, conflict-sensitive reconstruction and development, as well as humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness, and related peace-building initiatives.

- Generate a more pro-active and operational conflict prevention posture from Member States and the ECOWAS system.

ECOWAS – Civil Society Cooperation

Cooperation between ECOWAS and civil society shall take the following roles and responsibilities into consideration: a. Member States and civil society within them shall bear the principal responsibility for peace and security. To this end, civil society organizations and the private sector shall constitute valued and bona fide partners at the regional (ECOWAS), national (Member State) and local (community) levels in the implementation and evaluation of the ECPF and in cooperation arrangements with external partners.

ECOWAS shall facilitate [i] the periodic evaluation of the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) and other partner civil society networks in the region with a view to strengthening internal democracy, inclusiveness, programming and oversight; [ii] the establishment of a mechanism similar to the UN ECOSOC with modalities for Memorandums of Understanding and different levels of accreditation to serve as an interface with civil society networks; [iii] Information sharing with civil society networks and setting up of communication channels for civil society inputs into ECOWAS policies and programmes.

Civil society organizations shall [i] contribute to the conceptualization, development, implementation and monitoring of ECOWAS policies and programs on peace and security; [ii] mobilize and channel civil society concerns and findings into ECOWAS initiatives; [iii] lead advocacy in Member States through awareness raising, lobbying and campaigns around ECOWAS resources, including the Community Court and Parliament, policies and interventions; [iv] spearhead conflict prevention and peace-building activities in

Member States, especially at the national policy and community levels; [v] provide, alongside the private sector, technical and financial support for the implementation of activities within the ECPF.

ECOWAS – Member State Cooperation

Cooperation between ECOWAS and Member States shall be based on the principles of supranationality, complementarity and the division of labour. Consequently, Member States shall:

a. be the principal implementing agencies of conflict prevention and peace building initiatives. To this end, they shall take the lead in the identification of priorities and create conditions for the full and active participation of all citizens and their organizations, particularly women, the youth and community groups, in the conception, elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of conflict prevention and peace-building initiatives;

b. take active steps to incorporate regional and international statutes on peace and security into national legislation and ensure that the communities and institutions at the national and decentralized levels are abreast with developments at the regional level;

c. take regional dimensions of peace and security and ECOWAS instruments into account in the design and implementation of national programs, as well as in bilateral and multilateral relations;

d. promote the active participation of ministers of Member States in the ECOWAS policy-making process;

e. strengthen the capacities of ECOWAS National Units to serve as the conduit for permanent dialogue and interaction between the Commission and Member States;

f. prioritize the capitalization of internal financial, human and technical resources as the first step in the mobilization of resources for conflict prevention and peace-building interventions.

Cooperation with the African Union and United Nations

ECOWAS initiatives under the ECPF take into account the realities of the region but constitute a building block and integral part of the continental and global security architecture defined under the relevant provisions and derivative statutes of the Constitutive Act of AU and the UN Charter.

Within the overall framework of AU-ECOWAS cooperation, the African Union shall: a. work in partnership with ECOWAS to identify conflict pre-

vention and peace-building opportunities for cooperative action with ECOWAS and Member States;

b. work in partnership with ECOWAS to create space and facilitate resource mobilization for capacity-building and the implementation of the ECPF in Member States;

c. facilitate the enhancement of ECOWAS capacity for the implementation of the ECPF.

Within the overall framework of UN-ECOWAS cooperation, the United Nations shall: a. provide political legitimacy for the realization of ECOWAS goals within the framework of the ECPF;

b. cooperate with ECOWAS in creating space and mobilizing financial and technical support to implement the priority areas of human security in the region;

c. render support for capacity-building of ECOWAS, Member States and civil society to undertake conflict prevention and peace-building activities.

