

COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

ECOWAS COMMISSION



COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO

MESSAGE OF H.E. JEAN-CLAUDE KASSI BROU, PRESIDENT OF ECOWAS COMMISSION, TO STAFF OF ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF ECOWAS

DEAR STAFF MEMBERS,

1. On the auspicious occasion of the 45th anniversary of the founding of ECOWAS, which falls today 28th May, 2020, I am pleased to extend my sincere salutations to the builders of our Community. Thanks to their vision and dedicated efforts, our region can today pride itself on having achieved a free movement space spanning over 15 countries, an integrated economic market, and harmonized policies formulation mechanisms in all spheres.
2. Our theme for this 45th anniversary is: "45 years of solidarity at the service of the peoples of West Africa", supplemented by a first sub-theme which is about "Promoting socio-economic and human development, together through regional integration"; and a second one on "Combatting Covid-19 together in West Africa". It goes without saying that they resonate with this multi-dimensional vision of our Founding Fathers.
3. ECOWAS Member States have shown resilience over the past 45 years. Together, they have gone through many challenges – political, economic, social and health – such as the EBOLA crisis. Always, the Member States have endeavoured to show promising prospects of growth and all have been working hard to achieve social development at all levels.



4. Sadly, these efforts were compromised as the region was plagued with the security shock in the Central Sahel area and North Eastern Nigeria. In the past year, the Community convened an Extraordinary Summit to deal with terrorism in our region, which led to the preparation of a Regional Action Plan adopted in December 2019 by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government.
5. While joint efforts are being deployed to fight terrorism and assist the refugees and internally displaced people, our region is now facing a second shock stemming from the COVID 19 pandemic and unfolding in its health, economic, social and humanitarian impacts. To date, all our ECOWAS Member States are affected by the pandemic and the West African region had, as of 26th May 2020, 30543 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and regrettably 655 deaths.
6. On behalf of all Community Institutions, we commiserate with the bereaved families and express our deepest condolences for their losses. We further wish all those who are sick as a result of the pandemic a speedy recovery.
7. As early as late February 2020 when the region recorded its first case of COVID 19 patient, most Member States took stringent measures to contain the spread of the disease and to provide adequate healthcare for all. The ECOWAS Commission, working in close cooperation with the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), has from the very inception of the battle against COVID-19, been very active in buttressing the efforts of the ECOWAS Member States by providing essential medical supplies and equipment as well as capacity building, thus promoting a sense of solidarity among all at this crucial time.
8. The pandemic, in spite of very strong measures taken by the Member States to deal with the spread of the virus, has led to sharp decline in

economic activities, fall in financial resources concomitantly with increase in expenditure as well as social and humanitarian crises. To mitigate the impacts, Member States have taken important measures.

9. For their part, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Governments have once again demonstrated a high degree of solidarity, when meeting in a virtual Extraordinary Summit in April 2020, in order to make recommendations for collective action to halt the escalation of the pandemic. While recognizing the deleterious impact of the disease on the process of regional integration, socio-economic development in general, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government expressed their determination to do everything possible to protect their citizens from the disease and combine their efforts to find a lasting solution to the health crisis, especially through endogenous medical research.
10. They further seized the opportunity of their meeting to join hands with the larger African continent to mobilise international support for debt relief. This should free resources for putting in place protective and palliative measures taking into account the severity of the impact on the most vulnerable of the citizenry, especially those in the informal sector and the rural areas, especially women and youth. They also decided to support the establishment of the anti-COVID solidarity fund set up by the African Union.
11. We believe that the strident efforts which are being undertaken jointly by ECOWAS and its Member States in the social, humanitarian and economic fields will finally yield lasting results in the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic.
12. We must emphasise our warm gratitude for the strong and concrete support that we have witnessed on the part of the private sector as well as civil society in our Member States. It surely confirms the old adage that charity begins at home and encourages our external partners to

make the generous gestures of support which the Heads of State singled out for thanks.

13. Mention must be also made of our Continental partners such as the African Union and the African Development Bank which were instrumental in providing an African response to the crisis. Our thanks also go to our international partners including the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the European Union, the G20 and bilateral donors which provided timely support.
14. In the past forty five years, our Community which we serve has recorded many successes in all the domains, in spite of the enormity of the challenges that we have at times, encountered. It is important that we take pride and build on these achievements to consolidate them and move forward together.
15. In this regard, we recall our efforts in building on the progress we have made in the political field, particularly in the areas of democratisation and election observation. Thus, in the past year, we lent technical and financial support to the preparation and conduct of Presidential elections in Guinea Bissau and Togo; and legislative elections accompanied by voting for a referendum in Guinea. As we face five presidential elections in the next seven months, we have observed the difficulties that Member States could face as they contend with the constraints and risks imposed by the novel coronavirus 2019 in the organisation of elections.
16. On the economic front, we continue to build upon the core elements of our integration project, including freedom of movement of goods and people and the right of establishment. Every possible effort will be made to achieve the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) originally scheduled for July 1, 2020, as it should provide us with the opportunity to build and consolidate new regional and continental supply chains and other opportunities, in the face of the

difficulties that are being witnessed at the global level.

17. While we look back at our achievements, not only in the past year, but in the past forty five years, we must equally look to the future and see the promises it holds. It is true to say that we alone can make our future in spite of our challenges. Indeed, it would be appropriate to recall another adage which says that out of every challenge comes an opportunity. In this regard, I want to encourage all in the Community to adopt an optimistic view as to where we are going as a region. We have already started looking at the formulation of a post Covid-19 recovery programme which will draw on all our fields of endeavour.
18. I remain optimistic despite the current challenges, and I hope that through the rest of the year 2020, our 45th anniversary will prove to be a memorable one; for it is also the year in which we will demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness as a people, a region, a Community; and we must demonstrate leadership and faith in our ability to overcome the odds together, and to build a brighter future for the people of the ECOWAS Region.
19. I also want to congratulate all staff of the Community Institutions (Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice, Groupe Intergouvernemental d'Action contre le Blanchiment d'Argent en Afrique de l'Ouest (GIABA), West African Health Organisation (WAHO), ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) and Office of the Auditor General). By sheer dint of hard work and conscientious devotion to duty, you have collectively moved us further up the road to realising the fundamental vision of our Founding Fathers for accelerated economic and social development in the region, through a process of integration, buttressed by conditions of political stability, as well as peace and security, thus enabling its citizens to enjoy a shared and prosperous future.
20. We look forward to celebrating future anniversaries as a Community👉

when we shall look back and recognize progress made through our faith, courage and perseverance which have enabled us to stay the course and find the needed solutions to our formidable challenges.

Long live the people of the Economic Community of West African States.
Long live ECOWAS

H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou
President, ECOWAS Commission
28 May 2020

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned to the right of the name H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou.