



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**13TH ECOWAS-EU MINISTERIAL TROIKA MEETING
LUXEMBOURG, 28 APRIL 2008**

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. The thirteenth ministerial Troika meeting between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU) was held in Luxembourg on 28 April 2008 under the Co-Chairs of Her Excellency Madame Minata Samate Cessouma, Deputy Minister, Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union. The ECOWAS Troika further included the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Honourable Akwasi Osei-Adjei, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and NEPAD of Ghana, H.E. Abdou Abary, Ambassador of Niger to the EU, and H.E. Bagudu Hirse, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria. The EU Troika included Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and Mag Matjaž Šinkovec, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia.

P R E S S

2. Ambassador Leandre Bassolé, from the office of the UN Special Representative for West Africa (UNOWA) and Mr. Christophe J. M. Dabire, Commissioner in charge of Regional Markets, Trade, Competition and Cooperation of the UEMOA Commission, also attended the meeting as observers.

A. PEACE AND SECURITY

3. Both parties exchanged view on the peace security situation of the region. They expressed their concern on cross-border threats to peace and security such as trafficking in drugs, human beings and small arms. The EU welcomed the progress and efforts made by ECOWAS in its conflict prevention, mediation and peace keeping policies. This will enable ECOWAS inter alia to react to regional crisis, consolidate democracies in the region and provide support for post conflict recovery.

Côte d'Ivoire

4. ECOWAS and the EU reviewed the status of the implementation of the Ouagadougou political agreement signed in 2007. ECOWAS briefed the EU on the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The parties welcomed President Blaise Compaoré's continued engagement for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.
5. EU and ECOWAS noted the efforts of the authorities in terms of disarmament and demobilisation of the militias and encouraged the authorities to proceed towards effective demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of the armed forces especially in the North of the country which are essential elements in the peace process. Both Parties encouraged the authorities to take further steps towards resolving the difficulties and welcomed the ongoing efforts on restructuring and refounding of the armed forces.
6. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the setting of the date of 30 November 2008 for the presidential elections and urged Ivorian political actors to cooperate in order to ensure transparent elections in line with international standards. Both parties reiterated the importance of the voter registration and certification exercise and emphasized the need to achieve reliable electoral lists. The parties also considered how to further assist the election process in a manner reflecting the needs of the country.

Guinea

7. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the continued efforts of the government of Prime Minister Kouyaté to improve democratic process in the country. Although the political, social and economic situation remains fragile, ECOWAS and the EU encouraged all Parties to pursue the overall positive steps towards stabilisation of the country. The EU informed ECOWAS on the status of the article 96 process. The EU also expressed its appreciation for the mediation role that ECOWAS is playing in promoting political dialogue and reforms in Guinea and invited ECOWAS to pursue the joint approach vis à vis Guinea especially in the fields of human rights issues und good governance.
8. Following the adoption of new electoral laws and the setting-up of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the EU and ECOWAS underscored the need for setting a firm date for the legislative elections. They also reiterated their willingness to take part in the observation of these elections. The EU underlined the need to receive an official invitation from the Guinean government and the confirmation of the date in order to initiate the preparatory work for the electoral observation missions.
9. ECOWAS and the EU encouraged the authorities of Guinea to continue improving economic governance to redress public finances. In that regard, they welcomed the adoption of The Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility programme of the International Monetary Fund in December 2007. ECOWAS and the EU also encouraged donors to follow up on their promises to support the emergency programme and the 2007-2010 Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Guinea Bissau

10. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the increased focus of the Government of Guinea Bissau in implementing its ambitious reform programme. Both parties recognised that the international community has increased its support and expressed hope that these efforts would contribute in an effective way to the ongoing reforms. ECOWAS and the EU furthermore welcomed the announcement of the date for legislative elections to be held on 16 November 2008 and reiterated their readiness to observe them. For the EU an invitation from the authorities would need to be received sufficiently in time to start the appropriate preparations.
11. The parties stressed that drug trafficking constitutes a threat to sub-regional security and the credibility of Guinea Bissau, and encouraged the Government to continue strengthening its efforts to combat it. They welcomed the support of the international community to the implementation of the National Action Plan to Fight Drug Trafficking and existing plans to improve the justice and penitentiary systems.

12. Both parties commended the Government of Guinea Bissau for finalising the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Security Strategy. ECOWAS commended the comprehensive approach of EU support towards SSR in Guinea-Bissau and in particular the forthcoming launching of the ESDP mission. ECOWAS welcomed as well the action under the Instrument for Stability financed by the European Commission.
13. The parties stressed the importance of improving public finances management and welcomed the increased cooperation of the World Bank, the IMF as well as UEOMA and ECOWAS efforts. ECOWAS and the EU will continue to cooperate both on the ground and within the framework of the International Contact Group on Guinea Bissau.

Sahel (Security Situation in Northern Niger/Northern Mali)

14. ECOWAS and the EU reiterated their concern about the deteriorating security situation in the Northern parts of Mali and Niger and its adverse consequences on the security of the neighbouring countries. They condemned the use of landmines which constitute a great danger to the civilian population and an obstacle to the security and development of the areas concerned. Both Parties agreed to continue to share their analysis of the situation and welcomed the initiatives of the two countries to rally support by ECOWAS and the international community to solve the issue.
15. ECOWAS and the EU reaffirmed their commitment to respect the Bamako Declaration on Democracy and Good Governance which condemns, among others, violence as a political alternative.
16. ECOWAS and the EU reaffirmed their support for the Governments of Niger and Mali in their actions to preserve the peace and territorial integrity of their respective countries. Both sides emphasized the importance of regional cooperation to ensure security, peace and development in the Sahel region. In this context, the organisation of regional conferences addressing both security and development aspects was strongly supported by ECOWAS and the EU.

B. DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION AND ELECTIONS

Priorities for election observation

17. The EU commended ECOWAS for its continued efforts in terms of election observation in the region which will be further enhanced with its Electoral Assistance Unit. ECOWAS and the EU welcomed the ECOWAS Handbook on election and the establishment of the network of electoral commissions in countries of the sub-region. The parties also welcomed the recently updated EU Handbook for EU Election Observation Missions and a Compendium of International Standards for Elections. The EU also communicated its priorities for 2008 in terms of observation missions in the region that include Guinea, Ivory Coast and Guinea Bissau.
18. Both parties underlined the added value of regular cooperation between election observation missions when deployed simultaneously in the same country.

UN Peace Building Commission

19. The EU informed ECOWAS that the first years of work of the UN PBC have been a success and that it proved to be an important forum for strengthened coordination, cooperation and dialogue in the field of peace building. ECOWAS and the EU stressed that the implementation of commitments of all stakeholders involved in the process is crucial for the success of the PBC.
20. The EU informed ECOWAS of the adoption of the Cooperation Framework by UN PBC for Sierra Leone, a tool in the process of peace consolidation. The parties recalled the commitments of the government of Sierra Leone and its national and international partners and emphasized the need for their effective implementation.
21. ECOWAS and the EU congratulated Guinea Bissau in being included in the list of countries eligible for assistance under the UN PBC, and related PBF. ECOWAS urged the EU to further coordinate and cooperate closely with the UN PBC in creating the conditions for implementation of the National Security Sector Strategy and facilitating subsequent donor engagement.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Assessment of UN Human Rights Council sessions

22. The EU underlined that the UN Human Rights Council should be a key player in the promotion and protection of human rights in all regions of the world. They shared their assessment of the recent sessions of the HRC and the first round of the Universal Periodic Review, and agreed that this body has entered a more operational phase after having devoted much of its time and energy to the institution building process during its first two years of operation.
23. The EU expressed the view that the decisions taken on institutional aspects have equipped the HRC with the tools and methods that should allow it to fulfil its mandate responsibly and effectively. Both parties expressed their commitment to strengthen their co-operation in the framework of the HRC in a spirit of dialogue and collaboration.

EU-support to trial of Hissène Habré in Senegal

24. The EU informed ECOWAS on the outcome of the recent expert mission to Senegal and prospects for EU support to the trial and emphasized the good disposition of the Senegalese authorities to conduct the trial of Hissène Habré and preparations already made to this effect.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone

25. The EU praised the outreach activities of the Special Court aiming at raising awareness of the rule of law among the public and fighting against impunity. The EU emphasized the importance of the legacy of the Court for development of the international criminal law and underlined the existing financial difficulties of the Court to allow it to terminate its mandate and in particular the trial with former President of Liberia Charles Taylor on time.

D. IMPACT OF INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES

26. The two parties expressed concern with regard to the increase in prices of basic commodities and discussed its impact on Africa and in particular in West Africa. Instruments to overcome this potentially serious threat to peace and stability in the region were investigated. The parties agreed to keep monitoring the situation and maintain close dialogue to be able to react without delay. ECOWAS and the EU decided to work together to help the West African region to overcome the food crisis. To this end, the parties agreed to organise, as a matter of urgency, an EU-ECOWAS-UEMOA meeting in Abuja if possible by mid-May 2008, to set up a plan of action and identify short and long-term measures to tackle this issue. This will address notably food aid, social measures (example: income support, micro-credit, etc.), support to agricultural production (seeds, inputs, quality improvement, etc.) and support to ECOWAS-UEMOA common agricultural policies.

E. REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION PROCESS AND EPA DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION

27. The two parties exchanged views on the major priorities and objectives of the regional strategy for West Africa which focuses on fostering the integration process and supporting the peace and security agenda of the region. Both parties restated their commitment and determination to work on and conclude the regional programming according to the concept paper which was endorsed.
28. Both parties also exchanged views on the development dimension of EPA negotiations. They welcomed the recent progress in EPA negotiations, including the preparation by the region of an EPA related support programme.

F. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

29. The parties welcomed the report on the third meeting of the ECOWAS-EU Joint Group on Migration. Both parties welcomed the report from the third meeting of the ECOWAS-EU Joint Group on Migration. They stressed the need to take forward and strengthen implementation of the Action Plan agreed at the first Euro African Ministerial Conference in Rabat on migration and development, in July 2006. To this end, the EU welcomed the adoption on 18 January 2008 of the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration at the 33rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS. Based on a comprehensive and balanced approach, the ECOWAS Common Approach addressed the interdependence of migration issues and the need to deepen joint dialogue.

30. ECOWAS and the EU acknowledged the need to ensure synergy, coherence and a comprehensive approach in taking forward cooperation and activities in the area of migration by taking into account the results of the Rabat and Tripoli Ministerial Conferences and the follow-up of the Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, which is part of the Joint Strategy adopted by the Africa-EU Summit in December 2007.
31. The EU restated that developing cooperation in the area of migration with ECOWAS and its member countries is part of the dialogue on migration and development, under Article 8 and 13 of the Cotonou Agreement, with a view to reinforcing partnership and the implementation of concrete measures to the benefit and advantage of all parties involved. In this regard ECOWAS could play a key role as a regional player in Africa.
32. The EU welcomed the establishment by ECOWAS of Working Groups focusing on the themes identified in Ouagadougou in October 2007, and looked forward to discussing the outcome of the meeting in Praia on 12-14 May at the next meeting of the Joint Working Group on migration.

G. MEASURES TO COMBAT DRUG TRAFFICKING

33. ECOWAS briefed the EU on the on-going initiatives and the regional conference scheduled for June 2008 to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking in West Africa. The EU welcomed the dynamic initiative by the ECOWAS Commission and encouraged the international community to support the initiative.

H. OTHER MATTERS

Youth unemployment

34. The EU and ECOWAS discussed the impact of unemployment in West Africa. Both parties acknowledged that youth unemployment has political, social and economic implications. Both parties underlined the need to enhance the development of policies geared towards the promotion of employment intensive economic growth.
35. The next ministerial troika meeting will take place in Ouagadougou at a date to be determined by the parties.