



REGIONAL MEETING ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

**ABIDJAN, REPUBLIC OF COTE D'IVOIRE
21-22 JULY, 2010**

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. The Regional Meeting on Political Parties and Internal Party Democracy took place at the Hotel Ivotel, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 21-22 July 2010. The meeting, facilitated by the ECOWAS Commission, was convened to examine the state of political parties in West Africa with respect to their internal organization, financing and their ability to articulate visions and agenda to positively transform governance in the region. It was also to deliberate on networking possibilities and opportunities among political parties across the region, with a view to sharing experiences and best practices, enhancing their capacities, as well as the support that ECOWAS could render in this direction.

2. The Meeting was attended by representatives of political parties from the following Member States:

- Republic of Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- Republic of The Gambia
- Republic of Ghana
- Republic of Liberia
- Republic of Mali

- Republic of Niger
- Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Republic of Sierra Leone
- Republic of Togo

(See the list of political parties attached)

3. A delegation of the ECOWAS Parliament, representatives of Electoral Commissions of Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger and Togo, governance experts, representatives of research institutions and the media from ECOWAS Member States, also participated in the meeting.

4. The Opening Ceremony was addressed by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency, James Victor Gbeho, represented by Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, the ECOWAS Director of Political Affairs; His Excellency Eugene Allou Allou, Director of Cabinet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Côte d' Ivoire; Mr. Ali Yeo, the Director of Cabinet at the Ministry of Justice of Côte d'Ivoire; and Mr. Diabate Souleymane of the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission.

5. The Participants reviewed the state of the democratization processes in West Africa and the role of the political parties and ECOWAS in them. They highlighted the substantial progress made in the promotion and consolidation of multi-party democracy over the past twenty years, characterized by the growing number of democratically elected governments, steady liberalisation of the political space, and the improvements in the quality of elections conducted in Member States.

6. The Participants acknowledged the contribution of ECOWAS to the promotion of democracy, good governance, peace and security through its effective preventive diplomacy, as well as the implementation of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF).

7. The Participants however took note of the continued fragility of governance institutions, their adverse impacts on the democratization processes and the susceptibility of the situation to

reversals. To this end, they analyzed the responsibilities of political parties towards the promotion and consolidation of good governance and democratic culture in the region.

8. The Participants took note of the positive roles and impacts of political parties in governance processes in the region as the principal institutions underpinning political governance. They also noted several factors militating against their effectiveness, particularly the challenges of internal organization, financial sustainability, probity and accountability, the ability to function between elections, and to articulate and implement development-oriented policies.

9. The Participants expressed concern about the persistence of ethnicity, religious and gender discrimination and sectarianism that plague party organization and practice in the region, and decried the use of ethnicity, gender, religion and other differences as instruments of politics. They also acknowledged the need to enhance gender equality, inclusiveness and equity in party organization, particularly in the selection of leaders. They took note of weak cross-border cooperation among political parties and the low level of incorporation of regional norms and standards in their programmes and practices.

10. In their determination to set a process in motion to address the challenges identified, the Parties decided to create the Forum of West African Political Parties (FOWAPP) as a platform for interaction and mutual assistance. It also appointed an Interim Steering Committee to synthesize, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, the broad conclusions arrived at in the course of the Meeting into a Draft Charter and Work programme of the Forum.

11. The Participants agreed that the broad mandate of the Forum would be to facilitate capacity building, particularly in the areas of technical know-how; conflict management; internal political party organization; resource mobilization and management; the exchange of ideas and best practices among political parties in the region; and the peer review of political party activities within the framework of a regional governance review.

12. The Participants noted the limited involvement of ECOWAS in the efforts to enhance the capacities of political parties in the region and called on the Institution to redress the situation.

13. The Participants urged ECOWAS and Member States to urgently enhance the mandate and corresponding capacities of the Community and National Parliaments to ensure the effective separation and equilibrium of powers in the region.

14. The ECOWAS Commission and the participants expressed their appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the warm welcome, hospitality towards the participants, and the excellent facilities put at their disposal to ensure a successful meeting.

15. The parties agreed to reconvene at an inaugural meeting of the Forum to validate the statutes of the Forum at a date and venue to be determined after consultations.

Done this 22nd Day of July, 2010 in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire