



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

**ABIDJAN, REPUBLIC OF COTE D'IVOIRE**

**21-22 JULY, 2010**

**MEETING REPORT**

**INTRODUCTION AND OPENING**

1. The Regional Meeting on Political Parties and Internal Party Democracy held 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 forms of support that ECOWAS could render in this direction. The specific objectives of the meeting were to:

- Review the state of internal party democracy and examine the challenges militating against its attainment by political parties in Member States;
- Develop strategies to assist former guerrilla groups and other non-state armed groups make transition to peaceful political contest;

- Discuss ways of enhancing local laws, regional norms, institutional designs and other relevant reform measures to strengthen internal democracy in political parties;
- Devise frameworks for cooperation among political parties in Member States; and
- Determine future plans and programmes for the mainstreaming regional integration agenda into the programmes of political parties.

The meeting was attended by leaders of political parties from eleven ECOWAS Member States.

2. The President of the ECOWAS Commission, Ambassador James Victor Gbeho, represented by Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, the ECOWAS Director of Political Affairs, gave the Keynote Address in which he observed that the region was entering the era of democratic governance following successful internal democratization processes and effective preventive diplomacy efforts at the regional level. He expressed delight that democratic practices have enhanced economic growth in many Member States and restated the commitment of ECOWAS to the strengthening of the institutional infrastructure of democracy in order to further enhance sustainable human development in the region. He described as significant, the choice of year 2010 as the time for the convocation of the meeting, as it marked 20 years after the end of the cold war and the renaissance advent of democracy in the region after decades of authoritarian and military rule. He articulated to participants, the new regional Vision 2020 strategic agenda predicated on the movement from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of the Peoples- with emphasis on human security and integrated conflict prevention, and described their roles in this process as crucial.

3. Mr. Diabate Souleymane, Director of Cabinet, representing the Head of the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) of Cote d'Ivoire, welcomed participants to the Meeting and expressed appreciation to ECOWAS for its efforts towards advancing democracy and good governance in West Africa. He enjoined participants to take advantage of the opportunity that the meeting afforded them by coming up with strategies on how best to ensure that internal democratic practices are adhered to by Member States' political parties.

4. Mr. Ali Yeo, who represented the Attorney-General of Cote d'Ivoire, noted that cultivating good practices in political parties is an important step towards practicing good governance. He expressed his optimism that by the end of the Meeting, participants would be able to come up with relevant solutions that would better advance good governance and democracy in Member States. Ambassador Alou Alou Eugene, Director of Cabinet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Ivorian Minister of Foreign Affairs, noted further that political parties bring people of the same ideals together and thus was a main avenue for integrating people. He described political parties as one of the closest organs to the people and counseled that their involvement in regional processes would further fast-track functional integration among Member States. He thereafter expressed the willingness of the Ivorian Government to ensure that participants enjoy a productive stay in Cote d'Ivoire and wished them fruitful deliberations. He thereafter declared the Meeting open. After the departure of dignitaries, the Plenary Session started in earnest.

#### **PLENARY SESSION I: ROOTS OF AUTOCRACY IN PARTY POLITICS**

5. This session dealt with structural and institutional flaws that underpin the crisis of democratization in the West Africa region. The Session was chaired by Ambassador Kehinde Olisemeka, the Special Representative of the ECOWAS President in Côte d'Ivoire and featured presentations by four experts. Dr. Gilles Yabi, in his presentation on **“Democratic Culture and Political Freedom in the West African Region: Implications for Party Politics”**, observed that the region was an epicenter of diverse cultures and values which defined the features of democratic governance, and made imperative the ‘plurality’ of democratic practices. However, the current that runs through almost all the states was the prominence of the Executive in the democratic process. This prominence, defined by the endowment of the President with almost absolute powers, the use of public resources as instruments of political patronage, weakening of institutions of governance, and the stifling of the peoples’ voice in the decision-making process, has adversely affected the level of political freedom and has considerably weakened party politics. He called for the need for the foreign models of democratic practices to be adapted to conform to local circumstances and that sustained capacity-building was needed to

enable the citizens play important role in shaping the quality of policy alternatives, especially within the political parties.

6. The second presentation by Mr. Francis Laleye of the Swedish Embassy in Cotonou was entitled **“Interrogating Legal and Normative Frameworks for Regulating Party Politics in Member States: Local and Regional Dimensions”** dealt extensively with how institutional designs could enhance or inhibit the practice of democracy in Third World Countries, with particular emphasis on ECOWAS Member States. He outlined the centrality of political parties to leadership recruitment, policy formulation, the distribution of public values, and in the devolution of power. He thereafter submitted that given the strategic impact of parties on the overall health of the political system, adequate legal frameworks need to be put in place to enable them add values to the growth and development of the nation. Legal frameworks, according to him, are also important in preventing conflicts and in ensuring healthy competition. Nevertheless, violation of codes and ethics contained in the law often lead to political violence and state collapse, which was what obtained in some Third World countries in the past. He outlined the fundamental provisions relating to political parties that should be present in any political system. These include: the right to public funding, the right to acquisition of property, the freedom of speech relating to public policy, the right to recognition, and the right to participate in public life, among others. Lack of adequate legal framework, he counseled, is capable of eroding confidence in political parties and in the collapse of institutions of State.

7. The third presentation, made by Mr. Taiwo Olaiya (co-authored with Dr. Charles Ukeje), on the subject **“Youth, Ethnic Movement and their Impacts on Party Politics in Member States”** addressed the marginalization of the youth in the political space and their manipulation by the elite to satisfy parochial interests. Rather than the demographic bulge witnessed in post-independence African states leading to more advantages for the youthful population, it has rather witnessed their use as cannon fodder in the ethnicization of politics. He stated that the notion of ‘youth’ was alien to most West African States and the playing field is skewed to satisfy patriarchal and gerontocratic values. He made concrete recommendations on how youths can

be better utilized, for them to be empowered and to therefore enable them strengthen democratic governance. These included making provisions in party statutes to enable them make concrete contributions into decision-making process and reserving quota for them in major public offices.

8. Mrs. Katy Cisse-Wone's presentation, "**Women Participation and Leadership in Party Politics**" focused on the systematic manner in which women have been excluded from decision-making organs in the political process and what can be done to redress this. She emphasized that women are not a minority in the society but have been 'minoritized' in the political process. She supplied data from leading international organizations and research institutions to support the fact that West Africa with the possible exception of Cape Verde, has been generally backward in mainstreaming gender in the political process. She traced the root of this to cultural barriers, dysfunctional institutions and weak political parties, which were created to actualize the narrow ambitions of founders rather than for the overall development of the society. The irony of this, she pointed out, was that while West Africa has one of the highest number of political parties in Africa, this has not translated in creating opportunities for women to aspire to the position of leadership. She acknowledged that though the region has produced the first democratically elected female Head of State in Africa, it still has a long way to go in terms of having enough women in positions of authority. Only three ECOWAS States fall within the States with near-moderate number of women in parliament (Senegal with 40% of women in Parliament, Cape Verde with 53.3% and Liberia with 30.4%) with the others lagging behind. She concluded that women are less prominent in political authority generally because even in most cases where they have occupied public offices, they are often saddled with 'low politics' issues such as social development and women affairs. She advocated for enhanced financial empowerment, cooperation among women organizations, the enactment of laws to reserve quotas for women, partnership between men and women, and citizenship education as part of the strategies that should be employed in increasing the quality and quantity of women participation in politics.

## **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

9. On the issue of representativeness, the leaders of participating political parties and the other stakeholders agreed with the presenters that one factor that promotes autocracy and arbitrariness in political parties is the issue of internal management/functioning of the political parties. They decried the tendency for most parties to wind down their activities after the conduct of elections, and accused them of abdicating their political education and interest aggregation roles. They called for the reduction of the enormous power of Heads of state in Member States and canvassed for measures to be put in place for public funding of political parties in all Member States. According to some contributors, the root cause of autocracy within political parties can be located in the foreign models of democratic practices and the use of patronage as a tool of retaining the support of party followers.

10. On the issue of the youth, it was submitted that although the youth constitutes the core of the rank and file of the party, they have limited involvement in decision-making processes. They are also politically misused and have often been transformed into agents of anarchy. The case of the Green Youth Movement in Gambia was cited as an example of a group created to guard party assets but was never involved in major decision-making.

11. On the institutional dimension, the case of The Gambia was again cited as a bad example where the electoral processes are guided by draconian and undemocratic rule, thus making the attainment of genuine democracy a mirage. The three legal frameworks guiding the processes are the Public Order Act, Elections Decree and the Constitution. These laws are often used by the Inspector-General of Police to obstruct freedom of parties to carry out their activities. These laws also supersede the provisions of the Gambian Constitution in the interpretation of the law enforcement officials in the country, and with the active support of the country's President. There were also suggestions for measures to be taken to streamline political parties

by reducing their numbers in Member States in order for them to be adequately financed and for them to compete effectively during elections.

12. On women empowerment, some participants blamed women for lacking the courage to present themselves to contest for political offices. Parties were cautioned that their imposition on members could negatively affect performance and doom the chances of the parties in the future as that would be seen as an undemocratic practice. Some participants also accused youths of not ordering their priorities rights and of being too pre-occupied with how to make money. Some participants questioned the competence of women to render quality service and called for the political will by leaders to appoint only competent women into positions of authority rather than wives and daughters of government leaders only. Overall, participants recommended that aggressive steps be taken to tackle the problems of illiteracy and poverty in order to ensure that the problems of democratization are reduced significantly. On women and representation, it was agreed by all that the situation should be redressed. Many participants agreed on the point that seats must be reserved for women in Parliament and that this should be enshrined in the Constitutions of Member States. The need for affirmative action for women in order to mainstream gender in politics was also identified. Women were therefore called upon to develop self-confidence in order to take full advantage of existing opportunities aimed at empowering them. On youths, they agreed that there is need for the youth to champion their own causes. Participants also agreed on the need to develop robust laws and institutions (Political Parties Act, Political Parties Registration Commission and domesticate the principles found in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance). They called on ECOWAS to assist political parties with funding support and technical know-how. They also resolved to sustain the idea of networking at the regional level to share experiences.

## **RESPONSE BY PANELISTS**

13. **Dr. Yabi:** "What is the negative part of our culture on democracy, and what can be done to redress the situation?" was the basic question posed by Dr. Yabi in surmising the thrust of his response. He argued that whilst there is need for redesigning our institutions of governance,

there is however the need to do away with the corruptive aspects of our culture capable of impacting democratic governance negatively. These include patronage politics, executive dominance, gender inequalities and social exclusions, among others. He also canvassed for investment in education, human development and the economy as they are all crucial to the strengthening of party democracy. He advocated for more powers to be given to the ECOWAS Community Court to try cases of violations of political rights and ensure the implementation of regional norms.

14. **Mr. Laleye:** The internal bad governance of the parties was a critical issue that the parties needed to reflect upon and reform. He reiterated that there was need to put in place equitable, fair and resilient rules within political parties, and for this to exist within the larger institutional framework regulating party politics in Member States. He also made a call for sanctions against those who are involved in anti-democratic activities within the parties and voiced his support for the reduction in the number of political parties as many of the parties are inactive and not well governed.

15. **Mr. Olaiya:** He pointed out that strong men are the major obstacles to proper internal party democracy in the region as they have made the task of building strong institutions almost impossible. He called for special quota to be reserved for women in the political process and canvassed for institutional measures to ensure that women so appointed are would protect the collective interest of women in particular, and that of the public in general, rather than the interest of the ruling elite groups.

16. **Mrs. Cisse-Wone:** In her response, she said that women marginalization is structural as they were culturally, economically, socially and religiously powerless. She reiterated her call for special quota to be reserved for women and for representatives of the political parties to commit themselves to this. She called on the parties to show the way in this direction by starting the implementation internally.

## **PLENARY SESSION II: RESPONDING TO THE LACK OF INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN MEMBER STATES**

17. Skipped.

## **PLENARY SESSION III: PECULIAR CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIZING PARTY POLITICS IN WEST AFRICA**

18. The Session was chaired by Brigadier General Francis Agyemfra (rtd.) a Fellow of the Institute of Economic Affairs, Accra, Ghana. It dwelt on emergent and immediate challenges deserving of practical and creative strategies, in the region's journey towards sustainable democratic governance. The Chairman outlined the achievements recorded by West African countries in the consolidation of democracy, especially the freedom of the press and regular elections in Member States, which have become more credible over the years. He lauded the preventive diplomacy efforts undertaken by ECOWAS and its impact on the transitions in Togo, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea. He expressed optimism that Niger would successfully conclude her transition to democracy by the end of the year. Nevertheless, he cautioned against lethargy as most states in the region have not yet consolidated their democracy. On this note, he called on participants to make practical recommendations, capable of supporting democratic consolidation in the region.

19. Dr. Mathias Hounkpe made his presentation titled **"Incentives for Impunity: Party Regulation, Manifesto, and Capacity for Political Mobilisation"**. He discussed the use of impunity as an instrument of exclusion and monopolization of power by the elite in the political party space, within Member States in the region. While pointing out that there is a direct relationship between impunity and internal regulations, he submitted that weak rules and norms within the parties often encourage impunity. He argued that if the party is not

institutionalized, it cannot be sustained and is likely to die with its founder. He also explained that if there are poor regulations, institutional building becomes problematic and as internal regulations of political parties affect institutions of government, the governmental processes become weakened and compromised. Once internal regulations do not operate properly, one will not have proper selection of leadership, which is a fundamental cause of the crises of development in the Member States. Impunity, according to him, has the capacity to not only hinder the proper selection of leaders but will also reduce the space and opportunities for conflict resolution. On the other hand, allowing internal democracy to thrive is capable of strengthening the mobilization capacity of the party and in ensuring success at the polls. He probed further into the imperative of ideology for the parties to be able to fashion durable and relevant manifesto and internal ethos, and maintained that this will help reduce the emphasis on ethnicity in politics. To ensure that politics of exclusion is discouraged, he explained that a minimum level of regulations is needed across Member States. He recommended that this should be done at the party and governmental levels, with the participation of the people. He also recommended the reform of party regulations/statutes, the reduction in the number of parties in Member States, improvement in the level of interaction between the parties and the people, and the need for the parties to invest in capacity-building for their members so as to enable them observe good practices in party administration.

20. Professor Kunle Ajayi made a presentation on the topic: **“Atrophied or Irrelevant: The Opposition in One-Party Dominant States in the West African Region”**. In his paper, the presenter sought to investigate the value of the opposition parties in a multi-party democracy, the relevance of the opposition to emerging democracies in the region, catalyzing factors that enhance or undermine the attitude and capacity of the opposition and finally, how opposition parties in the region can be emboldened, empowered and transformed to achieve better performance behavior. He stated that political parties constitute the basis of contestations and competition for both political offices and policy choices, while the opposition parties are integral component of the party system. For him, the quality of a democracy is often measured by the corresponding quality of the opposition parties. Important roles played by the opposition, as outlined by him included: alternative government to the incumbent; shadow

cabinet and training of future leaders; making the ruling party accountable; greater and vigilant election monitoring. In terms of the performance of the opposition, he divided the region into three major groups. The first group is made up of countries which are in the process of institutionalizing their democracy and have strong opposition parties. They include Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone). A marked feature of progress in the first group is that power oscillates between the ruling party and the opposition. The second category comprises States which have not recorded significant political progress and thus have weakened opposition parties. These include Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Gambia, Nigeria and Togo. The third category typified countries in which the military has the civil society as its main opposition and party activities are not allowed to flourish. Only Niger Republic falls within this category. He however dwelt extensively on the second category, citing the fact that one-party domination of politics can be associated with personalization of power by the executive, failure to separate the government from the party, a lack of ideological foundation for existing parties, weakness of the civil society, almost monopoly of access by the ruling party to state resources, material poverty of members, denial of media access to the opposition, executive infiltration and lack of desire of the opposition parties to penetrate the rural areas. He counseled that these are areas any follow-up activities by the regional body should target. Regional norms should in addition, enhance the liberalization of the political space, poverty reduction, freedom of the media, and reduction in the power of party executives.

21. Mr. Fanbulleh (General Secretary Emeritus of the Unity Party of Liberia) made a presentation titled **"Post Conflict Party Structuring and the Challenges of Transformation: Case Studies of former Guerilla Groups in the Mano River Basin"**. His presentation was largely inspired by the Liberian case study. He said that in Liberia, only three armed groups successfully transformed into political parties. Most of the rebel groups suspicious about the imposition of sanctions after disarming made the option of transforming to parties unattractive. However, for the leading rebel groups, the restoration of peace was an opportunity to solidify their hold on power, especially in their strongholds. Thus, the occupation of political offices, rather than the building of democratic structure was the attraction. This situation has in his opinion, not

helped the strengthening of the parties. In particular, he decried the penchant on the part of ECOWAS and the international community to lay more emphasis on conducting elections immediately after the end of conflict in states like Liberia to the detriment of the young political process in the country at that time. The lack of democratic orientation by the rebel groups makes it impossible for them to therefore exhibit democratic virtues in their internal affairs. This factor also ensures that rebels who have lost out in elections go back to the trenches to start a new one while the victorious ones will do everything to close up the political space and disallow political freedom. This he attributed as part of the remote causes of the Liberian second civil war. He recommended the creation of institutional safeguards (like strong laws) to guide the transformation of former rebel groups into political parties and constant re-orientation and capacity building for such new political parties.

22. Prof Augustine Loada spoke on the subject **“Party Financing and ‘Voice’ in Decision Making”**. He articulated the importance of financial resources to the success of political parties in achieving their set objectives, but that it has not always been available to parties that are not in power, a factor that is accountable for the almost monopolization of power by ruling parties with access to enormous financial resources. He stated that whilst it is possible to regulate funding and financial sponsorship in a way that will encourage healthy competition among political parties, it is however impracticable. This is because the party with access to resources will always use it to undermine the others. He stated that since party politics was capital-intensive and with the widespread poverty in the society, access to resources, rather than party programmes was unfortunately fast becoming the critical factor in winning elections. In particular, he lamented happenings within the regional context, in which people do not factor financial requirements into the creation of the party (they create parties now and think of the funding aspect later). This he noted has impacted on their capacities for resource mobilization negatively. Rather than the members financing the party, it is often the party leaders doling out money to members. Therefore, (with the exception of a few cases), it is the person with the money that often get the votes. ‘Money politics’ also poses bigger problem for the political system, including problems of unethical practices, constitutional manipulation/ violations, circulation of drug money, funding by prostitution rings, all of which underscore the importance

of regulating money issue in politics. Whilst public funding of parties is good and should be encouraged, the Professor pointed out that it can be problematic as there is currently no agreed formula that can be adopted as a good practice, and can be applied in all Member States. This mode of funding is also susceptible to abuse and corruption. Rather than focus on money as an end in itself, Professor Loada counseled that parties should focus on grassroots mobilization as this will reduce their dependence on money. Public funding should also be accompanied by better frameworks for accountability and transparency, while candidates who violate the provision of the Electoral Act in funding their campaigns should be disqualified. He strongly canvassed for the creation of regulatory agencies for political parties, whose mandate will include the monitoring of funding in order to reduce abuse and encourage a level playing field during elections.

## **QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

23. On the relevance of critical governance institutions to the strengthening of political parties (especially the opposition), participants called on ECOWAS to support capacity-building programmes aimed at strengthening both the parties and other institutions such as the media, the electoral commissions, human rights and anti-corruption organizations, as well as the political parties. In particular, concerns were raised that ruling parties have been interfering with the recruitments into the armed forces by putting their loyalists in the military, a trend which was described as capable of destroying national unity. They also called on ECOWAS to review the activities of both electoral commissions and Political Parties Regulatory Commissions (where they exist) in order to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for the parties in the political space.

24. Participants also commented on the specific situation in some Member States. In The Gambia, a situation whereby the Electoral Commission's Chairpersons have been rapidly changed without sufficient justification was decried. This factor was allegedly one of the reasons responsible for the inability of the Commission to conduct credible elections. On Togo, the situation was described as the seizure (as opposed to winning) of political power by the

ruling party. The opposition parties claimed that before an acceptable election can be conducted in the country, there was need for the Justice and Reconciliation Committee to do its work as contained in the country's Peace Agreement.

## **RESPONSE BY PANELISTS**

25. **Dr. Hounkpe:** He reiterated the importance of strong ethos and rules within the political parties as important to their perception by the people and ultimately to their performance at the poll. He stated further that due to the failure of political parties to devise clear-cut ideologies and therefore sell themselves to the electorate, they have been rejected by the people in the past as seen for example in the Republic of Benin in the 2006 elections. He noted that history might repeat itself in other Member States if the rules and programmes of the parties were not well articulated and if members do not obey their own rules.

26. **Professor Ajayi:** He harped on the need to separate the party from the government as this will facilitate good governance and safeguard the interests of the opposition parties. He called for aggressive poverty alleviation programmes, political education and the rejuvenation of community groups and civil society organization in order to sensitize the people on the need for free and fair competition in the political space.

27. **Mr. Fanbulleh:** He reiterated his call for structured and holistic capacity-building programmes for former rebel groups that have been transformed into political parties. He stated that in Liberia, this should be done ahead of the forthcoming Presidential election in order to make it credible and peaceful.

28. **Professor Loada:** He called for a regional framework that would encourage the establishment of more institutionalized, more structured and less fragmented political parties. He also called for a reduction in the number of parties that exist at present in most Member

States as it appears impracticable for them to meaningfully contribute to democratic growth as presently constituted.

29. In rounding up, Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah reviewed comments made by participants and expressed satisfaction with the quality of reactions and comments alike. He further informed them of the strategic direction of the Political Affairs Directorate's programmatic activities on good governance, which are now more structured and woven around critical institutions like the Parliaments, the Judiciary, human rights and anti-corruption institutions and political parties. He stated the end point of these activities as the facilitation of effective structural conflict prevention in the region that is, finding and demobilizing the triggers of conflict. Furthermore, he observed that the issue of ethnicity in party politics was very serious and unhealthy for regional integration and development. He stated that in most Member States, no single ethnic group can monopolize political power (on the strength of their demographic weight) without the support of other ethnic groups, a factor that has prevented ethnicity from leading to full-scale war in certain States in the region. He suggested that regional norms should contain provisions aimed at discouraging ethnic-based political parties. He informed participants that as the meeting entered into the critical group session segment, they were being tasked with the onerous responsibility of recommending a suitable model of regional networking capable of further strengthening their structures and processes. The participants were also expected, according to him, to decide on the type of structure (whether based on ideological divide or an omnibus structure) that is suitable for cross-border cooperation and networking among the parties.

30. The programmes for the final day of the Meeting commenced with the division of participants into two working groups. Group one was tasked with the responsibility of recommending the typology and elements of regional cooperation and what should be the obligations of ECOWAS to the regional platform. Group two was given the responsibility of making recommendations on the content of such regional norms, in particular, issues of funding, inclusiveness, diversity, party regulation and manifesto, interests of the opposition, former guerilla groups, as well as on the issues of resource management and civic culture.

## GROUP REPORTS

31. **Group 1** report highlights included the adoption of the Mali-Ghana model as suitable for cross-border political party networking. They recommended that ECOWAS takes the lead in facilitating the forum. They recommended the following core objectives for the Network, namely: capacity building for political parties, sharing best practices and setting up benchmarks; and to serve as a moral force that will assure compliance with agreed benchmarks. They also recommended strategies of implementing the objectives of the Network, such as peer review of parties, information exchange, ensuring compliance with the provision of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and commitment of members. In addition to facilitating the Network, they recommended that ECOWAS should play monitoring and coordination roles, and should put in place awards for political parties that are operating in line with regional standards. Within this framework, Parties will be tasked with disseminating regional governance instruments to the people. The group thus recommended the establishment of a Forum of West African Political Parties (FOWAPP). All their recommendations were adopted in principle.

32. **Group II** report highlights included report highlights included recommendations that ECOWAS should design and develop a Charter on the formation and operation of political parties which takes into consideration certain minimum best practices, establishment of a peer review mechanism for the political parties, facilitation of the creation of independent bodies/institutions to monitor and regulate activities of political parties, and the adoption of standards on financing party politics. They also recommended the establishment of a common and independent basket funds for party management with disbursement tied to compliance with established norms. ECOWAS was also called upon to ensure the conduct of regular elections and discourage the monopoly of power by some party founders/leaders. They also wanted ECOWAS to appoint experts on integration from within parties. They recommended that the regional norms should guarantee the rights to exist freely, right to access state resources and the right to be consulted on major national issues. The proposed responsibilities of the Network included; opposition parties should be constructive; provide alternative policy options;

discourage the use of armed militants; parties should not threaten mayhem and chaos in their countries; parties should not preach retribution and vengeance of parties and government should they win; and that parties should be accountable in the use of state resources. They also recommended that ECOWAS should establish a programme cycle involving verifiable disarmament followed by capacity building and de-traumatisation leading to democratic contests. The substance of the recommendations was adopted, save for the pre-eminent role given to ECOWAS. It was suggested by Dr. Musah that ECOWAS's role should be restricted only to that of facilitation and not designing the details of the Network.

## **CONCLUSION**

33. In conclusion, the parties reached broad agreement on the following points:

- The need for parties to be active and play important roles in nurturing governance institutions between elections;
- The need for sufficient and equitable public funding of parties;
- The need for political parties to abhor discrimination based on ethnic, gender, religious and social considerations in the society;
- The need for accountability and transparency in the management of party resources, especially public funds available to the party;
- The need for the ruling political parties in the region to separate the party from the government by ensuring that among others, public resources are not deployed inordinately for the advancement of narrow party interests, public policies are not shaped by partisan considerations and that party leaders operate within the ambit of the rule of law;
- The need for cross-cutting policy on gender that should be applicable to all the Member States. While calling on competent women to make themselves available for service, they further agreed that this quota shall be reflected in appointive and elective offices within the political parties;

- The need for Governments of Member States to guarantee the rights of the opposition parties in order to enable them play their roles in deepening democratic culture and practices in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. It called for the release of political prisoners in some ECOWAS Member States;
- The imperative for Governments of Member States to put in place policies on poverty reduction and wealth creation through human development, investment in the informal sector and the organised private sector, blocking of leakages in the States occasioned by corruption, and investment in critical infrastructure, in order to discourage a culture of patronage and corruption in the political space;
- The need for ECOWAS to put in place a special technical support and capacity-building package for former guerrilla groups that have been transformed into political parties in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone in order to enable them contribute to the development of democratic culture; and
- The need for Governments of Member States of their commitments to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and called on ECOWAS to facilitate the application of relevant sanctions on erring Member States;

34. Participants at the meeting adopted a Communiqué, containing the most critical of the groups' recommendations (which is attached as Appendix 1). An Interim Steering Committee was also selected by political parties' representatives. The Committee has the mandate of codifying the groups' submissions into a **"Charter on Regional Norms and Standards for Political Parties in Member States"** which will be adopted at a follow-up meeting to be convened before the end of 2010. The members of the Committee as follows:

- a. **Coulibaly Soungaho**- (Rassemblement des Républicains) Côte d'Ivoire
- b. **Dr. Mai Ahmad Fatty**- (Gambian Moral Congress) The Gambia
- c. **Bernard A. Mornah**- (Peoples National Convention) Ghana

- d. **Alomiza M. Ennos**- (Congress for Democratic Change) Liberia
- e. **Mahamadou Sissoko**- (Union pour la République et la Démocratie) Mali
- f. **Hon (Dr) Usman Bugaje**- (Action Congress) Nigeria
- g. **Madam Adjamagbo-Johnson**- (Convention Démocratique des Peuples Africains) Togo

35. The members were enjoined to carry out their responsibilities dutifully. Mr. Okorodudu, ECOWAS Principal Programme Officer on Good Governance promised to facilitate a meeting for the Steering Committee before the end of November 2010. While declaring the Meeting closed, Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, ECOWAS Director of Political Affairs, thanked all participants for attending the inaugural meeting and wished them safe journey back to their various destinations.