

ECOWAS COMMISSION

ABUJA, NIGERIA

DECEMBER 15 – 16, 2016

Opening Statement

Ambassador Marjon V. Kamara

Foreign Minister of the Republic of Liberia & Chair of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers

H. E. President of the ECOWAS Commission,

Distinguished Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Finance

The Vice President of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice

The Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission, and all

Commissioners and Officials of the Commission,

Delegates, Experts representing Member States,

Citizens of the Community

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this important meeting, and to the beautiful city of Abuja. I take this opportunity to thank immensely the Federal Government of Nigeria for the formalities put at our disposal and courtesies extended.

As you all know, we meet twice a year as a body to review critical issues of our Community, take decisions and where applicable, make recommendations to the Authority of Heads of State and Government, all aimed at strengthening our Community.

As we assemble here today at this 77th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, there is high expectation that our deliberations will be thorough and focused, taking account of the weighty issues on our agenda. We must aim to reach decisions as consensually as possible taking into consideration the interest of our Community.

We meet at a time of great hope but also high anxiety. Many Member States of our Community are making great strides politically and in their socio-economic development. Other Member States are moving slowly along the route to recovery from the negative impact of the global financial crisis marked by major reduction in the prices of their major export commodities.

Our anxieties are driven by actions taken in our Community which disregard the principles of our protocols on democracy and good governance and without exception we are all very anxious about the precarious security situation wailed by terrorist attacks. None of our countries is immune from these attacks.

Yesterday, the Council on Mediation and Security dedicated a full day's work to the consideration of security matters, conflict prevention and mediation. Today, our discussions will concentrate on other matters on which the Community is engaged.

We have seventeen (17) items for decision, ranging from the Presentation and Consideration of the 2016 Annual Report of the President of the Commission, the consideration of the report, including recommendations of the just ended 20th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee to the Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 50th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. There are four (4) items for our endorsement, including the Information Note on One Health, the operationalization of the Regional Center for Disease Control (ECOWAS/CDC), amongst others, and eight (8) items for information.

Clearly, from these agenda items, we can see there is much work to be done in a short span of time. Efficient time management is critical if we are to complete this work today. Therefore, colleagues, I personally solicit your full cooperation, and valuable contribution to the discussions so that together we may succeed in taking decisions and framing forward-looking recommendations that will benefit our Community.

Let me share with you information on some of our engagements since we assumed the Chairmanship of the Council in June 2016. As you know, working in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, we held meetings in various locations and succeeded in identifying our regional candidates for vacancies at the African Union (AU) where elections will be held in January 2017. Similarly, we have been engaged in ECOWAS initiative to resolve the political stalemate in Guinea Bissau, which discussion led to our visit to that country. Also, we accompanied Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Chairperson of the Authority, to Niamey, Niger to discuss a wide range of sub-regional issues. Likewise, we held discussions on the margins of TICAD Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya to agree on candidates from our region for positions in AU.

Additionally, quite recently we paid a two-day visit to Abuja, Nigeria as part of the delegation of the Chair of the Authority, Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who met with the leadership and staff of the Commission to acquaint herself with the working of the Commission.

In the same spirit, while in Abuja, we paid a courtesy call on the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where both discussed a wide range of issues in enhancing the work of the Commission and ensuring the consolidation of peace and security in our sub-region.

In addition, many dignitaries from the Community visited Liberia and were received by us and had the opportunity to exchange views with the Chairperson of the Authority.

Excellences, at this juncture, I would like to recognize and extend my deep appreciation to the leaders and officials of the ECOWAS Institutions for giving our citizens the opportunity to participate in ECOWAS' activities for protecting their rights and promoting their welfare. They instill in us a sense of pride and win for us much respect and credibility from the international community.

Let me remind you of the tedious task ahead and sincerely implore your support and dedication to completing and concluding these tasks in the specified time allotted us.

I wish us all fruitful deliberations.

Compliments of the Season!!

I thank you.