



**Remarks of the Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender,
ECOWAS Commission at the Ceremony of Delivery of ECOWAS
Humanitarian Assistance in Liberia**

Honourable Minister of Gender, Children and Social
Protection,

The Deputy Ministers present,

The Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS
Commission,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to be here today to perform a very important task which aims at addressing an issue which has been very dear to my heart. The challenges faced by our children, brothers and sisters who have one way or the other suffered from the Ebola scourge is a matter which the ECOWAS Commission remains concerned about and in which I feel personally connected to.

Before I continue please allow me to transmit the well wishes of the President of ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Marcel Alain de Souza who wanted to be here himself and has asked me to express his sincere regrets. Indeed as an expression of that desire, the President while planning this mission, had written to specifically notify the President of Togolese Republic (as the ECOWAS Supervisor of ECOWAS Ebola Intervention

Programmes) of his intended visit to Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. He still looks forward to coming here as soon as possible.

In the fight against Ebola in Liberia, Please allow me to recognise the Excellent leadership of H.E, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of the Republic of Liberia. As the challenge abated, we continued to monitor the doggedness of the President to get rid of Ebola and also address the challenges coming from it. As a mother, the passion Mama put into the struggle is well acknowledged not only in the ECOWAS region, but the world at large. On behalf of the President of ECOWAS Commission, we would like to congratulate her Excellency for success against Ebola.

May I also acknowledge, the very determined team of experts and technicians who supported the fight against Ebola. We are aware that the President was able to achieve the great feat through these people who worked fearlessly despite all the risks. The cooperation of the people of Liberia in the fight must also be acknowledged. To all, we say, felicitations. We also felicitate and thank all our development partners who stood by us during those very difficult times.

Honourable Ministers, Excellences, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we lost people to Ebola. The pains of the loss are still fresh in our minds. Personally, I ponder always on the situation and continue to ask God to help us never to experience this again. May I therefore crave your indulgence to rise for 1 minute to the souls of the departed. May God Almighty bless their souls (Amen).

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, the challenge created by Ebola remains one of our nightmares in the ECOWAS Commission and although we continue to discuss how best to assist the victims, we are still discussing with our partners on preparedness to deal with such challenges should they occur again in our region. We ask you the citizens and our partners not to relax as we believe that to ensure this experience does not come to us again, we need collective support, information sharing and effective capacity building.

Going down memory lane, I wish to recall that the first reports about Ebola came to us as a rude shock in early 2014 while we were holding the Mediation and Security Council. In line with ECOWAS humanitarian, social affairs and health mandate, the ECOWAS Commission quickly instructed the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) as soon as the first cases of Ebola was reported in 2014 to conduct a quick technical assessment and recommend immediate actions. The report of WAHO then enabled ECOWAS to support training of responders and provide assistance to victims. However, as the situation aggravated, it was quickly understood that the impact of Ebola went beyond Health issues.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen, following discussions at management meeting, the then President of the Commission, provoked an Extra Ordinary meeting of ECOWAS Heads of States on Ebola. During that Extra Ordinary meeting, ECOWAS Commission presented a plan of action on the fight against Ebola to the Summit.

The Heads of State promptly adopted the ECOWAS plan of action while designating their Colleague, H. E Faure Gyassingbe, President of Togolese Republic as Supervisor of ECOWAS actions against Ebola and also set up the Ebola Solidarity Fund into which Member States contributed funds to address the challenge among other directives to the ECOWAS Commission.

The Togolese President undertook several actions including calling for an International Round table which held in Accra-Ghana in 2015 to solicit support. One of the outcomes of this Round table is the invaluable support by the US Government which included a Regional Capacity building programme through training of delegates, called the **West Africa Disaster Preparedness Initiative (WADPI)** Programme. I am pleased to note that the Republic of Liberia benefited from this programme through training of over 60 Liberians delegates in Kofi Anan International Peace Keeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Ghana. I am aware that Liberia has moved a step further to that training by building capacities based on the knowledge and experienced from that training.

Honourable Ministers, permit me to also recall the Technical Assessment Team sent from the Commission in 2015 to evaluate and report back to the ECOWAS Commission with recommendations for appropriate action in support of our Member States affected by the Ebola scourge. The ECOWAS Humanitarian Technical Assessment Team visited Guinea, Liberia and here, Sierra Leone. On their return to ECOWAS, the team in their report, recommended immediate, Mid Term and Long Term actions to address the impact of the Ebola scourge.

One of the recommendations for immediate action was the need for an urgent provision of relief materials including food and non-food items. This was taken very seriously by the ECOWAS Commission and the sum of Seventy Thousand US Dollars was immediately approved for this purpose. However, owing to the need to finalise the processes in line with ECOWAS procedures coupled with the serious financial difficulties faced by the Commission in the recent past, that was not realized as quickly as we wanted it. However, I believe that it is never too late and we hope that our good intentions will make some humble impact on the beneficiaries especially the orphans.

Honourable Minister please allow me to state here that I feel humbled today that we could as ECOWAS, support our children and others who dearly need help as we perform this ceremony of handing over the Sum Seventy Thousand US Dollars to the Government on behalf of the People of the Republic of Liberia who are victims of Ebola. I am glad to note that this fund has since been transferred to the account details provided by the Government.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to note on behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, that although the ECOWAS Commission has faced financial difficulties as a result of challenges arising from delayed remittances by Members States of the Community levy, we remain committed to the plight of our citizens. We are continuously working assiduously to attain our objectives especially towards the realisation of an ECOWAS of the peoples as anticipated in the Vision 2020 strategy. On behalf of the President of the Commission, I wish to use this opportunity to

solicit understanding and support of our Member States to work with us to realise our collective dream,

Thank you so much for the wonderful work done to realise this mission and the elaborate reception accorded us since our arrival in Monrovia.

Dr Fatimata Dia Sow
ECOWAS Commission
Abuja

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