COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA
AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES



COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES
ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE
DE L'OUEST

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SEVENTY-FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION

OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Accra, 15th – 16th May 2015

FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS Commission
Accra, May, 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventy-Fourth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers was held from 15th to 16th May, 2015 in Accra, Republic of Ghana. The meeting, which was attended by Ministers in-charge of ECOWAS Affairs and Finance, was chaired by Hon. Hanna Serwaah Tetteh, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana and Chairperson of Council.

2. The following Member States were represented:

- Republic of BENIN
- BURKINA FASO
- Republic of CABO VERDE
- Republic of COTE D'IVOIRE
- Republic of The GAMBIA
- Republic of GHANA
- Republic of GUINEA
- Republic of GUINEA BISSAU
- Republic LIBERIA
- Republic of MALI
- Republic of NIGER
- Federal Republic of NIGERIA
- Republic of SENEGAL
- Republic of SIERRA LEONE
- TOGOLESE Republic

3. The following institutions and specialized agencies of ECOWAS were also represented:

- ECOWAS Commission;
- ECOWAS Parliament;
- Community Court of Justice;
- Office of the Financial Controller;
- West African Health Organisation (WAHO);
- Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA);
- ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID).

4. The list of participants is annexed to this report.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

5. In her opening statement the Chairperson of Council, Honourable Hanna Serwaah Tetteh (MP), welcomed all participants to the 74th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers, in the beautiful city of Accra, Ghana.

6. Recalling the 73rd Ordinary Session of Council and the latter's approval of the budget of ECOWAS Institutions to enable them develop and implement key

initiatives and programmes in 2015, she indicated that this mid-year session was expected to review the implementation status of programmes, taking into account any challenges and opportunities experienced during the period.

7. Referring to the fight against the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), the Chairperson expressed delight in representing the Council on the WHO declaration ceremony on 11th May, 2015 following the Ebola Free status conferred on Liberia on 9th May, 2015. In the same vein, she highlighted the improved economic growth of the sub-region by 4.5 % in 2014 and a projected growth of 5.1% in 2015, despite the EVD.

8. Regarding the current Ordinary Session of Council, she invited Member States to, in reviewing the tasks assigned to our Community, take into consideration, the liquidity constraints at the Community level as well as the financial and economic difficulties in Member States. In this regard she requested them, in their usual wisdom and selfless interest demonstrated over the years, to critically examine the respective memoranda and programmes presented to them, notably:

a) Status of the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol;
b) Update on the Institutional Reforms and related matters on Human Resources, Finance and Administration;
c) End of tenure of Statutory Appointees of the Commission;
d) Status report on the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa; and the European Union so as to improve the governance system of our community institutions.

9. On the 40th anniversary of our sub-regional body, ECOWAS, the Chairperson reminded Member States to continue their efforts to promote regional economic integration by consolidating the common market, harmonisation of trade policies and full implementation of the trade liberalization scheme in line with their aims and objective, which are to promote co-operation and integration.

10. In conclusion she urged Council to critically and selflessly scrutinize the documents before them to enable them take informed decisions to aid the Authority in the discharge of its own responsibilities towards the Community.

11. On that note she thanked participants for their attention, declared the 74th Session of the Council of Ministers, open and wished them fruitful and constructive deliberations as well as a happy 40th Anniversary celebrations.

12. The Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Toga Gayewea McIntosh read the address of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo. The President who had accompanied the Chair of Authority to the signing ceremonies of the peace accord in Mali expressed gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana for their cooperation in organizing the meeting, in the lovely Ghanaian capital. He expressed sincere appreciation to the Ghanaian authorities for the excellent facilities once again put at their disposal, to ensure the successful conduct of the meeting.

13. Recalling the exemplary presidential elections in Nigeria, the President paid tribute to the two candidates, their Excellences President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and General Muhammadu Buhari, for the excellent victory delivered to the Nigerian people, and sincerely thanked them for the positive picture of West Africa they have presented to the rest of the world. He expressed hope that the Nigerian example would spread throughout our region for the rest of the year and thereafter.

14. Regarding the presidential elections in Togo, the President stated that the electoral campaign was peaceful and the voters demonstrated admirable maturity in their conduct on the day of the polls.

15. In the same vein he expressed optimism of the peaceful conduct of elections to be held later in the year in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. In that respect, he stated that the Commission would take all possible measures and commitment in maintaining its support to the Government of Mali for the consolidation of peace and security in the North and the Government of Nigeria for the fight against the Boko Haram terrorists. While saluting the memory of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks, he presented deep condolences to the families of the victims.

16. Highlighting the results achieved since the 73rd Council he cited the success recorded in Northern Mali and North-Eastern Nigeria. In the same vein he lauded the efforts and personal commitment of His Excellency, President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, in the fight against the Ebola Virus Disease. He testified that the generosity and wisdom which governed his actions have contributed largely to enhancing the results obtained by our region in the fight against this epidemic.

17. On Guinea Bissau, the President recalled the donor roundtable to obtain concrete support from the international community for its reconstruction and development programme and the Commission's continued support for that Member State in line with the instructions of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. In this context he stated that the Commission has proposed that the ECOMIB mandate be extended to 31st December, 2015 and the conditions provided for them to continue assisting the Guinea Bissau Government to meet the new challenges of their reconstruction and development programme.

18. With regard to Burkina Faso, the President also highlighted the Commission's continued support to the transition process in Burkina Faso by providing His Excellency President Macky Sall of Senegal with all the cooperation necessary to accomplish the task conferred on him by his peers. In this connection, he expressed confidence of a successful outcome in the transition process in Burkina Faso.

19. On the Common External Tariff, the President expressed the Commission's strong determination to support Member States in the uniform implementation of the CET as well as additional protection measures.

20. Regarding the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between West Africa and the European Union, he reported that the Commission has continued efforts to assist Member States in view of facilitating the signing and ratification of the agreement.

21. In conclusion, he extended a warm welcome to all participants in the 74th Ordinary Session of Council and expressed a sincere wish that the success of their meeting would indeed exceed expectations.

22. The full texts of speeches are attached to this report.

II. ELECTION OF BUREAU

23. The following bureau was elected:

- Chairman - Republic of Ghana;
- Rapporteurs - Republic of Senegal ;
  - Republic of Cabo Verde;
  - Republic of Guinea.

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

24. The following agenda was adopted:

A. OPENING CEREMONY

i. Opening Address by the Host Minister, Chairman of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers;
ii. Statement by the President of the ECOWAS Commission;

B. CLOSE- DOOR SESSION

iii Election of Bureau;
iv Adoption of Draft Agenda and Work Programme;

C. ITEMS FOR DECISION

v Presentation and Consideration of the 2015 Interim Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission;

vi Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 73rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers;

vii Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller's 2014 Final Report;

viii Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 17th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee;

ix Presentation and Consideration of the Report on Community Levy Stakeholders Meeting;

x Presentation and Consideration of the Memorandum on Institutional Reform Phase 1;

xi Presentation and Consideration of the Report on the Extension of Tenure of Statutory Appointees at the ECOWAS Commission;

xii Presentation and Consideration of the Report on End of Tenure for the Third Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament pending the coming into force of the Supplementary Act;

xiii Presentation and Consideration of the Memorandum on the Allocation of the Headquarters of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA);

xiv Presentation and Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 47th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

D. ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

xv Presentation of the Memorandum on the Adoption of the Abidjan Declaration of Minsters of Justice of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness;

xvi Presentation of the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers Responsible for Women Affairs and Gender;

xvii Presentation of the Report of the 5th Statutory Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Culture;

xviii Presentation of the Final Report of the 4th Meeting of the Ministers of Security on the Biometric ID card;

E. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

xix Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa and European Union;

xx Presentation of the Report on Sahel Strategy;

xxi Presentation of the Report on Common External Tariff in the Sub region;

xxii Presentation of the Memorandum on the Community Development Programme (CDP);

xxiii Presentation of ECOWAS-Japan Business Forum;

xxiv Any Other Business;

xxv Adoption of Report;

xxvi Vote of Thanks;

xxvii Closing Ceremony.

IV OUTCOME OF DELIBERATIONS

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Item 5: Presentation and Consideration of the 2015 Interim Report of the President of the ECOWAS Commission

25. The 2015 Interim Report was presented by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Kadré Désiré OUEDRAOGO. The Report gives a comprehensive account of the status of implementation of the Community Work Programme from November 2014 to May 2015 and outlines key challenges and prospects for the region for the remainder of 2015. It also assesses recent economic developments in West Africa within the context of the international economic environment and highlights potential challenges and prospects for the West African economic integration process.

26. The presentation notes that the region recorded an economic growth rate of 6.2 percent in 2014 with a forecast of 5.6 percent for 2015. The decline in growth rate is due mainly to drop in price of oil and other commodities, the outbreak of Ebola disease as well as Boko Haram insurgencies. It is predicted that four Member States may have growth above the ECOWAS average of 5.6 percent in 2015. The Member States are Côte d'Ivoire with the highest projection of 7.7 percent, followed by The Gambia (7.0 percent), Benin (6.0 percent), and Togo (5.7 percent). However, the Report notes that the following four Member States may experience lower growth prospects in 2015 compared to 2014: Mali (5.0 percent), Niger (4.9 percent), Nigeria (5.5 percent), and Sierra Leone (1.3 percent).

27. Concerning inflation, which is a measure of the general price level of goods and services in an economy, forecasts show an improvement in the general price level as the region's inflation rate is projected to decline from 8.6 percent in 2014 to 7.9 percent in 2015. Thus, with the exception of Ghana and Sierra Leone with projected double digit inflation rates of 15.1 percent and 10.1 percent respectively in 2015, all other Member States project single digit inflation rate in 2015. The President commends the Member States that in spite of the global decline in the prices of commodities, they have made concerted efforts to reduce fiscal pressure, ensure tight monetary policy and increase the foreign exchange reserves with a view to sustaining macroeconomic stability.

28. Concerning the implementation of the Community Work Programme during the period under review, the President enumerated the significant achievements recorded by all the Community Institutions and Agencies in spite of the challenges faced in some parts of the region particularly in relation to the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease and Boko Haram insurgency. On economic and monetary integration, he highlighted the commencement of a process of establishing an ECOWAS Monetary Institute, which will be a precursor to an ECOWAS Central Bank that will be established before the single currency is launched in 2020. He also noted that within the short and medium-term, Member States had made efforts to comply with the macroeconomic convergence criteria.

29. He also presented efforts made to harmonise public finance statistics, make available credible statistics on timely basis, mobilise resources for the Community Development Programme (CDP) projects, and conclude the review of the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy Document and its Action Plan.

30. On the issues of intra-regional trade and the establishment of a Customs Union, the President intimated Council that at the 46th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in December 2014 in Abuja, majority of the Member States signed the EPA Agreement and arrangements were underway for the signing of the Agreement by the remaining Member States and Mauritania. As regards the hosting of the Headquarters of the Regional Competition Authority, three Member States expressed interest. In addition, the ECOWAS CET regime effectively commenced on 1st January 2015 and measures have been put in place to address any challenge that might come up. Also, a Task Force has been set up as an ad-hoc supervisory, arbitration, advocacy and mediation body for the smooth running of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). With respect to the free movement of persons, rights of residence and establishment, he stated that the 46th Ordinary Summit adopted the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card which aims at facilitating mobility and promoting security in the region.

31. Concerning the development of natural resources in the region, he highlighted efforts the Commission had made to promote strategic products for food security and sovereignty, foster an enabling global environment for regional agricultural development, and ensure sustainable environmental protection and development. He also provided information on the status of human development issues which include financial support to Member States affected by the Ebola Virus Disease, material and financial support to victims of volcanic eruption in Cape Verde and internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the Boko Haram insurgency. He also stated, among others, that as part of preparations for the 40th ECOWAS anniversary, preparations are ongoing for the organisation of the First Edition of the ECOWAS Festival of Arts and Culture (ECOFEST) in May 2016.

32. The President gave a comprehensive report on the activities relating to private sector promotion and development of infrastructure in the region. On private sector development, he stated that the draft Common Investment Policy and draft Common Investment Code necessary for the creation of an ECOWAS Common Investment Market were endorsed by the sector Ministers in December 2014. In addition, progress has been made in the integration of capital markets in the region under the supervision of the West African Capital Market Integration Council (WACMIC). He also gave progress report on the infrastructure programmes in respect of land, air and rail transport in the region. On telecommunications and information technology, he discussed efforts being made to facilitate cellular networks' acquisition of the Fourth Generation Technology (4G) which has speeds that are four to five times faster than 3G networks. In addition, he explained efforts being made to meet the 17th June 2015 deadline for the transition from Analogue to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) and operationalize the ECOWAS TV Project by September 2015. Moreover, the President spoke on efforts made to reduce energy deficit in the region and extend the West African gas pipeline beyond Ghana.

33. On the issue of promotion of good governance, peace and security, the President discussed the efforts of the Community leadership, alongside the AU and UN leadership to resolve the political logjam and ensure a smooth transition programme in Burkina Faso. The Commission also participated in the International donor conference on Guinea Bissau held in Brussels and the Inter-Malian talks held in Algiers. A Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) for Pilot Operational Zone E, comprising four ECOWAS Member States - Benin, Niger, Nigeria and Togo - was inaugurated in Cotonou on 13th March 2015. On elections, the Commission provided assistance and participated actively in the successful conduct of the elections held in Nigeria and Togo. Efforts are being made to ensure successful elections in other Member States preparing for elections before the end of the year.

34. Lastly, the President highlighted the areas in which concerted efforts would be deployed to deepen the regional integration and development processes. The areas include provision of support to the Ebola-affected countries to ensure economic recovery and lift travel restrictions to the countries; sustaining and strengthening of actions undertaken to consolidate peace and security in the region, especially those relating to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and terrorist attacks in Mali; reduction of the obstacles to the free movement of persons and goods; and removal of the challenges relating to the application of the relevant provisions on the Community Levy.

35. Other measures include encouragement of the remaining ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania to sign as soon as possible the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union to pave the way for its implementation; acceleration of development efforts on regional infrastructure, in particular those relating to Trade and Business Competitiveness; ratification of outstanding ECOWAS protocols and conventions by national parliaments; and timely conclusion of the institutional reform programme.

36. Council lauded the quality of the Interim Report and commended the Commission for the actions taken. At the end of the presentation, Council sought clarifications on some of the issues raised and adopted the Report after clarifications were provided.

Item 6: Presentation and Consideration of the Status of Tasks Assigned by the 73rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers

37. The Commission presented an implementation status report on the tasks assigned to the ECOWAS Community Institutions by the Council of Ministers at its 73rd Ordinary Session held in Accra from 19th to 20th June, 2014. The Commission reported as follows:

- The Ministers of Health met and agreed on the establishment of the Regional Centre for Disease Control as recommended by Council to contain and eradicated not only the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease, but all possible diseases in the region.

- Sustained measures to assist in the lifting of flight restrictions to Ebola affected Member States in the sub-region have been taken and follow-up measures are on the way to complete negotiations with those that have not yet resumed.

- The Commission, other ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies and the Consultants met from 3rd to 5th March 2015 and addressed the outstanding issues of concern to Council. The Commission was equally requested to examine the relevant Protocols and indicate to Council whether or not it is necessary to make amendments to take account of the recommendations set out in the report. The examination was undertaken. The outcome of the convergence meeting and the Commission's observation on the legal texts are contained in a separate memorandum to be considered at this current meeting. The memorandum covers issues related to:

    - moving the various Agencies/Institutions from the various locations to Abuja;
    - the role and placement of Permanent Representatives in the operation of the Community programmes and their organizational structure;
    - the role of the National Units in the restructuring exercise.

- Extension of consultancy agreement with the Consultants by the ECOWAS Commission for another period of approximately six (6) months to enable them finalize the report has been made, and the Consultants are at work.

38. Following deliberations, Council took note of the report and requested the Commission to provide tablets with soft copies of information to promote paperless meetings.

Item 7: Presentation and Consideration of the Financial Controller`s 2014 Annual Report

39. This 2014 final report covers the period 1st January to 31st December 2014 and also covers Community Institutions/Agencies whose operations benefit from Community Levy funds as well as other resources allocated by the Council of Ministers for the 2014 budget year.

40. The Council of Ministers at its 71st Ordinary Session approved a total budget of UA 410m. The budget was to be funded from current year Community Levy Proceeds of UA 192.3m, Community Levy Arrears of UA 195.2m, Contribution Arrears from Member States of UA 3.2m; Donor Funds of UA 19.2m and miscellaneous income of UA 0.2m. With this funding structure, about 95% of Community Budget is funded from own resources and 5% from Donor Contributions.

41. At the end of the year, UA 203.1m or 50% of budgeted income for the entire year was realised. Community Levy yielded UA 187.8m or 91% of budget, Donors grants yielded UA 13.4 million or 70% and other income UA 0.130m or 65%. No

resources came in from Community Levy arrears. However, an amount of UA 1.76m was paid by Gambia in part fulfilment of its Contribution Arrears redemption plan.

42. A community-wide total expenditure of UA 168.5m was made during the reporting period. This aggregated amount is constituted as follows: Governing bodies UA 6.8m, Administrative Expenses UA 53.7m, Programme Expenses UA 52.7m, Statutory Obligations UA 2.9m, Intervention in Member States UA 42.9m, Peace & Security UA 1.7m and ECOLink implementation UA 5.9m.

43. The Financial Controller informed that the ECOLink Project is being implemented across Community Institutions/Agencies. ECOLink is expected to confer additional credibility on data and information generated from Community operations; it revolutionises resource application, accountability and reportage with real time accuracy and transparency. Reliable real time data could be generated, and if competently processed, would provide phenomenal insight needed for effective management decision and strategic institutional planning.

44. At the end of the report, ten (10) general and specific recommendations were made for the consideration of the Council of Ministers as follows:-

- There is urgent need for ECOWAS Agencies like GIABA and ERERA to leverage on donor funding sources in addition to ECOWAS funds for their activities in line with the regulations establishing them. This will reduce the incidence of their dependence on Community Levy as well as free additional resources to fund other equally laudable Community programs.
- In a bid to avoid flouting regional banking regulations and distorting Member States' economies, all payments for locally procured goods and services by ECOWAS Institutions/Agencies should be made in the local currency of the host country.
- Community Institutions/Agencies' banking relationship is highly skewed towards a single sub-regional bank. Community Institutions/Agencies should make deliberate attempts to patronise other healthy sub-regional banks as a way of spreading risks.
- The Commission and other Institutions/Agencies should henceforth engage banks to provide payment services at venues of approved meetings and events, including election monitoring. This measure is necessary to avoid risks associated with handling large sums of cash by staff and to conform to best practice as obtained in institutions like the United Nations.
- In order for Community Institutions/Agencies to improve on travel budget efficiency and avoid the current practice of discretionary and usually more costly payments for local transportation, communications and stipend during missions, the Commission should modify the existing per diem structure to include these missing elements.
- In view of the discrepancies that characterise payments to internationally recruited staff in respect of transportation of personal effects on

commencement and at end of service period, the Commission should institute a payment of fixed amount per destination, reflecting staff category.

- The current practice whereby Community Institutions/Agencies accumulate payment of gratuity due to contract staff is fraught with risk of payment default due to cash flow constraints. As a solution, Community Institutions/Agencies should henceforth pay applicable gratuity to such staff at end of each contract period. In the meantime, accumulated gratuity for serving contract staff, should be computed and paid off immediately.

- The Community Levy Management Committee should henceforth perform its assigned roles, particularly that relating to investment of Community resources in line with the Regulation establishing it.

- The Commission should follow-up with the Nigerian Government on the speedy renovation of the President's official residence in Abuja in order to save the Community from continuing rental costs.

- The Commission should earnestly conclude the ongoing negotiation with the Federal Capital Development Authority of Nigeria in respect of the abandoned Katampe Housing Estate Project to enable it off-set the Nigerian Government's related debt obligation. Concurrently and in line with recent tasks assigned by Council, the Commission should continue discussions with the Chinese Government for partnership in the building of an office complex that could accommodate all its Departments in Abuja. This would save the Community rental amounts of over $2 million per annum.

45. After deliberations and further clarifications by the Financial Controller, Council adopted the report and all the recommendations contained therein. Furthermore, Council requested to make proposals on a strategy to be adopted to ensure equitable geographical spread of Member State Nationals in ECOWAS Institutions. Following clarifications by the President on the Lagos property, Council found no objection to the President's appeal to the Nigerian Government for ECOWAS to maintain the residence in Lagos.

Item 8: Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the 17th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee

46. The Final Report of the 17th Meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee was presented by the Chairperson of the Committee, Mrs. Sena Siaw-Boateng, Head of the ECOWAS National Office in-charge of African Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of Ghana. The report dealt mainly with the following issues:-

- Status of Tasks Assigned to Community Institutions;
- Consolidated Budget Performance Report for 1st January to 31st December, 2014;
- Implementation Status of the Community Levy Protocol as at 31st March, 2015;

- Request for debt cancellation of $20 million provided to Guinea by the ECOWAS Commission for Financing the Emergency Electric Power Supply Programme to the city of Conakry;
- Request for ECOMIB Funding;
- Financial Controller's 2014 Report;
- Status of Implementation of the ECOLINK Project as at 31st March, 2015;
- Any Other Business.

47. After lengthy deliberations focusing mainly on the implementation of the Community Levy and the US$20m debt cancellation in favour of the Republic of Guinea, Council adopted the Report and made the following recommendations:-

- Write off the US$20 loan to Guinea;

- With regards to the proposal to impose sanctions on defaulting Member States in the implementation of the Community Levy, Council noted the proposal but indicated that the issue of financial mechanisms within the Community Protocols should be taken into consideration.

Item 9: Presentation and Consideration of the Report on Community Levy Stakeholders Meeting

48. The Commission presented the final report of the 3rd Meeting of the Community Levy Stakeholders which took place in Abuja from 14th to 15th April, 2015. In their presentation, the Commission indicated that the meeting was held to address the persistent challenges encountered by the various Member States in the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol.

49. After highlighting the various challenges encountered by the Commission in its responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Community Levy and subsequent to discussions by participants, the following recommendations were made to Council:

a) Set up a Presidential Task Force on Community Levy to be chaired by a Head of State to provide the needed political impetus for the effective implementation of the Protocol.

b) More effective monitoring and increase in the Technical and High level Missions to Member States by the Commission;

c) Harmonisation of the application of Levy procedures between Member states to ensure that all Member states comply fully with the provisions of the Community Levy Protocol

d) Capacity building programmes for officials involved in the Community Levy implementation process be organised by the Commission

e) Creation of National Committees for monitoring the implementation of Community levy in all Member States

f) The Commission should provide a standardised template for reporting of Levy Assessments

g) Remind Member states to take into consideration that in all cases of exemptions, accorded in their agreements/conventions with Partners, ECOWAS Community Levy is not compromised and to abide by the Protocol on the issue of waiver.

50. Following deliberations, Council adopted the memorandum and the recommendations contained therein with the exception of the setting up of the Presidential Task Force. Council further directed that the UEMOA model of the implementation of the Community Levy should be used as guidance for the improvement of the implementation of the Community Levy Protocol by the Commission.

Item 10: Presentation and Consideration of the Memorandum on Institutional Reform Phase 1

51. In their presentation of the memorandum on Institutional Reform Phase 1, the Commission recalled the 73rd Council of Ministers held from 9th to 11th December, 2014, which considered the Institutional Reform Phase I Report supported by the Consultants, Maxwell Stamp. Also considered was a Memorandum presented by the Commission on its reflection and suggestions with regards to the Report.

52. The Commission also recalled Council's directive for a Convergence Report on the Proposed Organization structure as well as a convergence memorandum focusing on those areas where Council's decisions were not conclusive, to be presented at its next meeting.

53. The Commission further highlighted the deliberations on the process of convergence during a 3-day roundtable meeting held from 3rd to 5th March, 2015 in Abuja following which the following recommendations were made:-

(a) Council should take a final decision at this Session in order to allow the finalization of Phase II of the reform agenda, which is directly related to the adopted organisational chart;

(b) Agreement should be reached on the modalities and date for the effective implementation of the decision reached;

(c) While accepting Council's decision to keep Agencies within Member States, it was critical that capabilities and programmes of these Institutions and Agencies would need to be strengthened to allow for greater impact of their operations on the citizens of the region.

54. The Commission also gave an indication of the size of the organizational structure, the proposed relocation of the Institutions/Agencies to Commission headquarters, the proposed expanded role of Member States Permanent

Representatives to the Commission, the Country Resident representatives' Offices in Member States, as well as the legal implications of the recommended structures.

55. In conclusions, the Commission invited Council to note that work on Phase II Report on systems, processes and human resources management has progressed and that a a final report shall be presented to Council by the Consultants at its next session.

56. After lengthy deliberations during which Member States expressed various objections in respect of the proposed structure as well as its related financial implications, Council noted that there was more work to be done before the report could be adopted and recommended an Ad hoc Committee to look into the matter and report to Council on or before the first week of July 2015.

Item 11: Presentation and Consideration of the Report on End of Tenure of Statutory Appointees at the ECOWAS Commission

57. The Commission presented a memorandum on the end on tenure of Statutory Appointees at the ECOWAS Commission. In their presentation, they recalled that the Heads of State and Government in July 2013, considered Council's recommendation to increase the current number of Commissioners from nine (9) to twelve (15), including the posts of President and Vice President. The rationale was to ensure effective and equitable participation of each and every Member State in the overall management of the Commission.

58. The Commission also recalled that at its 40th Ordinary Session, the Authority allocated the position of the President to Burkina Faso and appointed Mr Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo as the President of the Commission. The Commission further added that, the Extra-Ordinary Summit that took place in Abuja on 18th October, 2011 adopted the allocation of the following positions (batch 1) which would also be vacant in February, 2016 as follows:

President	- Burkina Faso
Vice-President	- Liberia
Commissioner, Infrastructure	- The Gambia
Commissioner, Macro-Economic Policy	- Mali
Commissioner, Trade, Free Movement & Tourism	- Niger
Commissioner, Political Affairs, Peace and Security	- Nigeria
Commissioner, Finance	- Sierra Leone
Commissioner, Agriculture, Environment & Water Resources	- Togo.

59. The Commission further informed that in line with Article 13 of the Supplementary Act A/SP.14/02/12 dated 17th February, 2012, all Member States in a letter dated 2nd February, 2015 were notified of the vacant statutory positions at the Commission.

60. Council's attention was also drawn to the potential issue of a full rotation of Member States in all available positions due to the two (2) sets of Statutory Appointees and also indicated that, the ongoing institutional reform exercise could

have an impact on the organogramme of the Commission and other Institutions and could eventually affect the current allocation of statutory positions to Member States.

61. In conclusion, the Commission invited Council to consider the setting-up of an Ad-hoc Committee to make proposals on the allocation of the vacant positions to Member States with a view to resolving the issue of the full rotation of the Member States.

62. Following exhaustive deliberations and taking into account its observations made in paragraph 56, Council set an Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee, comprising Cabo Verde, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Senegal to be supported by the Commission. The Committee is to report to Council at its next Extra-Ordinary Session scheduled to hold in the 1st week of July, 2015. An Extra-Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government is recommended to hold in the 1st week of August, 2015 to consider the report of Council. The Ad Hoc Committee is to perform the following specific tasks and present its recommendations to Council at its extraordinary session planned for first week of July 2015:

- Review and determine the modalities on the tenure and rotation schedule of Statutory Appointees and portfolios;
- Propose the role to be played by the Committee of Permanent Representatives;
- Review the previous decision of Council to establish an aviation agency, and see how it relates to the proposal made in the organizational structure under the transport department;
- Review the respective role and burden of responsibility sharing of the two proposed Vice President within the organizational structure.

Item 12: Presentation and Consideration of the Report on the Extension of Tenure for the Third Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament pending the coming into force of the Supplementary Act

63. The Parliament presented a memorandum on the extension of tenure of the 3rd Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament. They informed Council that the tenure of the 3rd Legislature (the current one) ends on August, 11th 2015. This means the current Legislature would have barely two months to arrange relevant processes and mechanisms to ensure the smooth take-off of the fourth Legislature with enhanced powers as would be provided by the Act.

64. They further informed Council that in the past, there was a one year vacuum between the tenure of the first and second as well as between the second and third Legislatures and that such a void could be avoided when ushering in the fourth Legislature as an enhanced one in 2016.

65. Accordingly, they recommended for Council's consideration, the extension of the tenure of the 3rd Legislature to run for an additional year, i.e. from 11th August, 2015 to 10th August 2016 to allow for enough time for the effective launch of the fourth Legislature with its enhanced powers.

66. After highlighting the activities to be undertaken for the smooth transition, Parliament requested Council to consider and endorse the request for a one year extension and submit same to the Authority for approval.

67. After exhaustive deliberations, Council directed the Commission to provide it with the Supplementary Protocol in the three official languages for their review before presentation to the Authority for signature. Council further recommended to the Authority of Heads of State and Government to allow for a transition period of five (5) months so that the new Parliament to come into effect by 1st January, 2016.

68. Affirming his commitment to the principles of rotation and strict respect for tenures, particularly within ECOWAS institutions, the Senegalese delegation expressed reservation over the extension of the term of the third Community Parliament to December 2015. In addition, the Senegalese delegation stressed the need for ECOWAS to be an example in the area of respect for governance standards.

Item 13: Presentation and Consideration of the Memorandum on the Allocation of the Headquarters of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA)

69. The Commission informed the meeting that the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at its thirty-fifth ordinary session in Abuja on 19 December 2008, adopted two Supplementary Acts on competition, that is, **Supplementary Act A/SA.1/12/08** adopting Community Competition Rules and the modalities of their application within ECOWAS, and **Supplementary Act ASA.2/12/08** on the establishment, functions and operation of the ECOWAS Regional Competition Authority (ERCA).

70. It specified that the main objectives of ERCO are, on the one hand, to promote, preserve and boost competition and enhance economic efficiency in the areas of production, trade and commerce in the region and, on the other hand, combat anti-competition practices which hinder, restrict and distort competition in the region.

71. There was a delay in the application of these Acts which led to the Commission President, on the basis of Regulation C/REG.15/11/09 establishing criteria for hosting ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies, launching an appeal to all interested countries to put in an application to host the Institution's headquarters.

72. Subsequent to the appeal, the ECOWAS Commission received three (3) applications from the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Benin to host the Regional Competition Authority (ERCA). The Commission has just completed an evaluation mission which assessed the offers of the interested Member States and has submitted the choice of ERCA host country to the decision of Council.

73. Following exhaustive discussions, Council selected by consensus The Gambia as host country for the ERCA headquarters. Both the Republics of Benin and Guinea Bissau who also requested to host the Centre, expressed their desire

to host ECOWAS Institutions in the future and should the opportunity arise, be given priority.

Item 14: Presentation and Consideration of the Draft Agenda of the 47th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

74. The Commission presented the draft agenda of 47th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

75. Council adopted the draft agenda annexed to this report.

ITEMS FOR ENDORSEMENT

Item 15: Presentation of the Memorandum on the Adoption of the Abidjan Declaration of Minsters of Justice of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness;

76. Mr. Bako Jean Fructueux, Deputy Chief of Staff, on behalf of Mr. Gnenema Mamadou Coulibaly, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Public Liberties of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire presented the Abidjan Declaration on Statelessness and described the difficult legal situation and its related serious repercussions in terms of human rights for persons without nationality, unrecognized by any State as a citizen and treated everywhere as a foreigner, even in their country of birth and residence.

77. The Commission recalled the first regional ministerial conference organized by ECOWAS and the HCR and held in Abidjan from 23 to 25 February 2014 on statelessness in West Africa to consolidate commitments made by Members with respect to combating statelessness and finding lasting solutions to nationality problems facing African in West Africa.

78. The conference led to the adoption of 62 recommendations aimed at ending statelessness and a 26-point Ministerial Declaration. The Declaration and recommendation form a solid foundation that can serve as a framework for Member States in their efforts to combat statelessness.

79. The Commission highlighted the Declaration urging ECOWAS to develop the necessary measures to avoid cases of statelessness in migration situations and review the community law in order include the necessary guarantees against statelessness.

80. After presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 16: Presentation of the Report of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers Responsible for Women Affairs and Gender

81. On behalf of the Minister of Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Ghana, Honourable Nana Oye Lithur, the Commission presented the report of the

meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Women Affairs and Gender which was held in Dakar, Republic of Senegal on 16 and 17 January 2015. The theme of the meeting was: "Gender Equality and Sustainable Development". The objective was the adoption of documents validated by the meeting of gender experts from ECOWAS Member States, at the end of a four (4)-day meeting.

82. The presentation of the report focussed on the following documents recommended for Council's adoption:

- Supplementary Act on the Equality of Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region;
- ECOWAS Plan of Action on Gender and Trade;
- ECOWAS Framework and Plan of Action on Gender and Migration;
- The Accra Declaration on Societal Vulnerability: the Social Inclusion Challenges of Environmental Change;
- The Declaration on the Abduction of Chibok Girls in Nigeria.

83. With regard to the declaration on the abduction of Chibok Girls in Nigeria, the presentation also highlighted the following:

i. Strongly condemn the abduction of Chibok girls, women, children and all other persons in the northern part of Nigeria by insurgents;

ii. Declare unacceptable and intolerable, the act of lawlessness and impunity demonstrated through the abduction of Chibok girls, women and children by Boko Haram. Further condemn in strong terms the recruitment and use of young girls as suicide bombers, the burning down of communities, destruction of infrastructure and hostilities in the Northern part of Nigeria by Boko Haram;

iii. Note the direct and indirect consequences of insurgency to include – reduced access of girls to education, kidnapping, forced marriages, rape and sexual harassment, reproductive health challenges and increased pressure on women to act as heads of households;

iv. Reaffirm that the abduction of persons is tantamount to violation of their fundamental human rights as well as an infringement on their dignity and self-fulfillment as human beings.

84. After presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 17: Presentation of the Report of the 5th Statutory Meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Culture

85. The Togolese Republic presented the report of the 5th Meeting of the ECOWAS Minsters of Culture. In his presentation, he recalled Decision A/DEC.6/01/03 of 31st January, 2003, by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, Decision A/DEC.6/01/03 of 31st January, 2003, Decision

A/DEC.6/01/03 of 31st January, 2003, adopting an Action Plan for the revitalization and strengthening of cultural cooperation among Member States within the framework of NEPAD.

86. The objective of the 5th Statutory Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Culture was to review the meeting report of the Technical Committee of Culture Experts held in Lomé from 27th to 29th January, 2015, in particular the recommendations made in the report and to take appropriate decisions to continue implementing the Action Plan for the development of culture.

87. He highlighted the following key issues presented and deliberated upon at the Meeting:

- Presentation of the Visit by ECOWAS Authorities to Religious Leaders of Nigeria;
- Presentation and Consideration of the Report of the Technical Committee of Culture Experts;
- Organisation of the maiden Edition of the ECOWAS Festival of Arts and Culture;
- ECOWAS Forum of Education for the Culture of Peace through Intra and Inter-Religious Dialogue;
- The Other Aspects relating to Culture.

88. He also highlighted some of the major recommendations focusing mainly on the under-mentioned issues:

- **ECOWAS Festival of Arts and Culture (ECOFEST):** The first Edition of ECOFEST will be organised in May 2016: as the culminating point of activities marking the ECOWAS fortieth anniversary celebrations;

- **ECOWAS Forum on Inter-Religious Dialogue:** The Inaugural Forum will take place during the last quarter of 2015. The theme of the Inaugural Forum would be « Education for the Culture of Peace in West Africa through Intra and Inter-Religious Dialogue »;

- **Promoting and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage:** The ECOWAS Commission is urged to put in place adequate financial resources for culture and capacity building for intervention by the Ministries of Culture and other technical establishments and organisations working on heritage in the region;

- **Intellectual Property:** The Member States and the ECOWAS Commission are urged to take appropriate measures in particular, legal measures to transform the Regional Copyright Observatory (RCO) into an ECOWAS Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ERIPO);

- **On other aspects of culture:** The ECOWAS Commission is urged to conduct as soon as possible a study on the existing cultural institutes in

the sub-region, with the view to establishing of an ECOWAS Arts and Culture Academy or to strengthen them.

89. After presentation, Council endorsed the report.

Item 18: Presentation of the Final Report of the 4th Meeting of the Ministers of Security on the Biometric ID Card

90. Mr. Moussa B. Nebie, Minister responsible for Regional Cooperation presented the report of the meeting of Ministers responsible for Security held on 25 April 2015 in Accra to review the technical features of the ECOWAS biometric identity card already adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Government in December 2014 in Abuja.

91. In his presentation, he indicated that the technical features reinforced the security features on the ECOWAS identity card to facilitate the mobility of people within the community space. These measures are in line with international standards recognized by ICAO.

92. The Council of Ministers took note of the Final Report of the 4th Meeting Ministers Responsible for Security on the ECOWAS biometric identity card thus adopting the recommendations set out therein, including:

I. The technical features of the ECOWAS identity card, with the key element attached to this report as an appendix

II. The establishment of a regional mechanism for monitoring the free movement of inter-state buses and passengers (based on the Abidjan model). The operational modalities of the said mechanism will be defined through a regulation of the Council of Ministers

III. The decentralization of the activities of the Free Movement Directorate to include close monitoring and direct assessment of free movement problems at the borders.

93. After intense deliberations, Council endorsed the report and all recommendations contained therein.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 19: Presentation and Consideration of a Memorandum relating to the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa and European Union

94. The Commission recalled that the 45th session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Accra on 10th July, 2014 had firmly approved the Economic Partnership Agreement between West Africa and the European Union. To realize this wish, the ECOWAS Heads of State and

Government authorized the signing of the Agreement at the end of their 46th session which took place in Abuja on 16th December, 2014.

95. As at 30th April, 2015, twenty-eight (28) Member States of the European Union had signed the Agreement while in West Africa, thirteen of the sixteen countries signatory to the agreement had signed. The remaining Member States are the Gambia, Nigeria and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Efforts are underway to obtain the signatures of these three countries shortly.

96. Following the EPA negotiation, conclusion and signature stages, the great challenge for which our region must prepare is the effective implementation of the EPA. Achieving the changes expected from the EPA development programme and the benefits from liberalization are subject to proper implementation of the agreement. In that regard, the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions have embarked on meetings in order to define the framework for the region's participation in the EPA's institutional mechanism and on negotiations of an Association Agreement with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, a country belonging to the same geographical area as West Africa which is holding EPA negotiations.

97. Thus, the WA-EU EPA institutional mechanism provides for joint supervisory and agreement management organs, some of which are decision-making bodies, others consultative bodies, and yet others specialized technical bodies.

98. Regarding the negotiation of an Association Agreement between ECOWAS and Mauritania in execution of the directives of the 44th Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, the Commission, on 14 November 2014, conducted the official launch of negotiations through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ECOWAS and Mauritania.

99. Comprehensive discussions were carried out from 2nd to 6th February, 2015 between the Mauritanian party and the ECOWAS and UEMOA delegation on the draft Association Agreement. The discussions focused on two basic points, namely, the creation of a free-trade zone between Mauritania and ECOWAS, and Mauritania's application of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (ECOWAS CET).

100. The Council of Ministers took note of the report and requested Member States who have not yet signed to do so.

Item 20: Presentation of the Report on Sahel Strategy

101. The Commission presented the Memorandum on the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy along with its action plan. The presentation briefly reviewed the background and rationale of the strategy, with particular emphasis on the will of the highest authorities of the region to draw lessons from the recent crisis in northern Mali and Nigeria and reassert the leadership of the West African Region in finding solutions to the chronic instability, isolation and underdevelopment of the Sahel area.

102. The Commission indicated that, the Action Plan of the strategy was articulated around 31 priority projects spread among the three strategic Axes and security support measures: Interconnection of Infrastructure (14); Resilience and food security (11); Education (3) and security support measures (3). The total cost of this action plan is estimated at US$ 4.75 billion and is planned over the period 2015-2019.

103. The Commission also presented the under-mentioned activities carried out in the context of the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy:-

(i) Development and validation of a Sahel strategy Paper along with an Action Plan;

(ii) Establishment of an institutional framework of coordination; and

(iii) Strengthening coordination and synergy between the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy and on-going initiatives in the Sahel region, especially the G5 Sahel Group, under the authority of the Ministerial Coordination Platform spearheaded jointly by the United Nations and the African Union, for which Mali has the Chairmanship.

104. The Commission further stated that following the finalization of the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy and its Action Plan, it is currently initiating consultations with Partners for its implementation.

105. After presentation, Council took note of the memorandum.

Item 21: Presentation of the Report on Common External Tariff in the Sub Region

106. In their presentation of their report, the Commission recalled that the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) came into effect in the Community on 1st January, 2015 following the roll out of a series of critical preparatory activities both at the national and regional levels in the year 2014. These activities culminated in the meeting of Ministers of Finance in November, 2014 and the subsequent official launch of the implementation of the CET in the Community by the Authority of Heads of States and Government at its 46th Summit held in Abuja on 15th December, 2014.

107. On the status of the implementation of the CET, the Commission reported that eight (8) member states have effectively began the implementation of the CET as at 30th April 2015. The eight (8) Member States are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. The remaining seven (7) Member States have lagged behind the implementation schedule due to the Ebola outbreak, legislative requirements, and technical considerations.

108. The Commission informed Council that an evaluation mission to all member states will be undertaken in July, 2015 to assess the implementation of the CET and help address any technical difficulties on the ground.

109. Council took note of the report and congratulated the eight (8) member states who have successfully migrated to the ECOWAS CET and invited the seven (7)

remaining Member States to undertake all necessary measures to ensure that the CET is applied in accordance with the directive of the Authority of Heads of State and Government before the year 2015 runs out. Council further directed the ECOWAS Commission to work closely with these member states to address any challenges they may be encountering to ensure that every Member State applies the CET.

Item 22: Presentation of the Memorandum on the Community Development Programme (CDP)

110. The Commission presented the Memorandum on the ECOWAS Community Development Programme (ECOWAS-CDP). It briefly recalled that the Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted the ECOWAS-CDP as the long-term development strategy for the Region, through the Supplementary Act (A/SA.04/07/14), during its 45th Session of July 2014 in Accra (Ghana).

111. The Commission indicated that as part of the recommendation of the Authority, it was enjoined to take all appropriate measures in order to mobilise adequate resources for the implementation of this Regional Development Agenda. It was further highlighted that the CDP Regional Document is composed of 242 regional priority projects with a total cost of $ 28.4 billion, of which $ 21.4 billion need to be mobilised.

112. It was further reported that the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire had agreed to host the High Level Conference and the Round Table for the financing of the ECOWAS CDP and that a Steering Committee was set up comprising representatives from ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, EBID, BOAD, WAPP, PPDU and representatives from the Government of Cote d'Ivoire.

113. Furthermore, given the number and high level participants expected at these events (Heads of State, Ministers, Governors of Central Banks, Presidents of Institutions, Development Partners, Presidents of Holdings), the Commission requested the full support and effective participation of Member States to ensure its success.

114. After presentation, Council took note of the report.

Item 23: Presentation of ECOWAS-Japan Business Forum

115. The Commission presented information on the ECOWAS-Japan Business Forum scheduled to hold from 28th to 29th October, 2015 in Tokyo, Japan. It informed that the forum which is themed "Showcasing Business and Investment Opportunities in the ECOWAS Region is being organised by the ECOWAS Diplomatic Group in Tokyo and the ECOWAS Commission with JETRO, JBIC, JICA, AfDB (African Business Promotion Support Network), Japan and Tokyo Chambers of Commerce as co-organisers.

116. In their presentation, the Commission indicated that the Forum is aimed to showcase business opportunities in ECOWAS Member States in the sectors of Banking and Finance, Infrastructure Development (Transport, Energy and Telecommunications), Agriculture, Mining, Culture and Tourism amongst others.

117. In conclusion, the Commission informed that, the expected outcome of this forum is the signing of Memoranda of Understanding between business people from both sides.

118. After presentation, Council took note of the report.

OTHER ITEMS

Item 24: Any Other Business

Return of Katampe Housing Estate in Abuja to the Federal Republic of Nigeria

119. The Commission in its presentation, recalled that ECOWAS Commission took a loan of US$11,220,596.58 in the late 90s from the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to construct a staff housing estates on a plot of land granted for free. The project was however not completed for habitation as at 2015 and a loan amount of US$9,834,020.58 has remained outstanding. Following discussions between ECOWAS and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, an agreement was reached for the Federal Government to retrieve the estate in exchange for writing-off the outstanding loan of US$9,834,020.58.

120. After presentation and subsequent discussions, Council endorsed the agreement reached between ECOWAS and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Migration

121. The Republic of Senegal raised the issue of young Africans dying in the high seas in their quest for greener pastures in Europe and urged Council to make a declaration requesting all Regional Leaders to intensify their efforts towards the creation of jobs. They stated that this would go a long way towards encouraging our youths to be engaged in gainful activities and restrain them from risking their lives in the high seas. Council decided to make a declaration in this regard.

5th Forum of Electricity Regulators

122. Burkina Faso informed Council of the anticipated hosting of the 5th Forum of Electricity Regulators during the course of the year. In view of the importance of this event, and considering the challenges faced by many Member States in the supply of electricity, they expressed the wish for the Commission to release its contribution to ensure the effective organization of this event.

123. In response, the Commission indicated that their contribution could be sourced from the contingency budget line.

Disease Outbreaks

124. WAHO informed Council of the outbreak of diseases such as meningitis, measles and cholera in some Member States and urged Council to contribute to the Regional Solidarity Fund to help them better combat these diseases.

GIABA

125. The Chairperson informed Council that GIABA, in their support programmes to Member States to combat money laundering, had entered into a contract with Jetlink Ventures to supply software equipment. She indicated that, following the signing of the contract and the down payment to the contractor, the latter supplied and installed the equipment in eleven (11) Member States. However, when they requested for the balance of payment, the Financial Controller objected. GIABA, therefore, solicited the intervention of the Chairperson of Council to resolve the issue.

126. Following deliberations, Council, while noting the objections of the Financial Controller in respect of the irregularity of the contract in question, endorsed the payment in order to avoid any legal implications. However, Council stated that the Financial Controller nor the current Executive Director should not be held responsible for this payment and decided that the Chief Internal Auditor should continue with investigations.

Item 25: Adoption of the Report

127. This report was adopted after amendments.

Item 26: Vote of Thanks

128. Please refer to the following page.

Item 27: Closing Ceremony

129. The Chairman of Council, Mrs. Hanna Serwaah Tetteh, in her closing remarks, thanked Council members for their contributions during the deliberations and for the spirit of camaraderie, which prevailed during their session. Thereafter, she declared the Seventy-Fourth Ordinary Session of Council closed, and wished all participants safe journey back to their respective destinations.

DONE AT ACCRA THIS 16TH DAY OF MAY 2015

HONOURABLE HANNA SERWAAH TETTEH
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

CHAIRPERSON

FOR: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

COMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA
AFRICA DO OESTE

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES
ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE
DE L'OUEST

SEVENTY-FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION

OF THE ECOWAS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Accra, 15th – 16th May 2015

VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at the Seventy-Fourth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers held in Accra, on 15th – 16th May, 2015 express their profound gratitude to His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairman of the Authority, and to the Government and people of Ghana for the warm African hospitality extended to them during their stay in Accra and for the facilities placed at their disposal to ensure the success of their meeting.

DONE AT ACCRA THIS 16th DAY OF MAY, 2015

THE SESSION