



# ECHOES OF ECOWAS

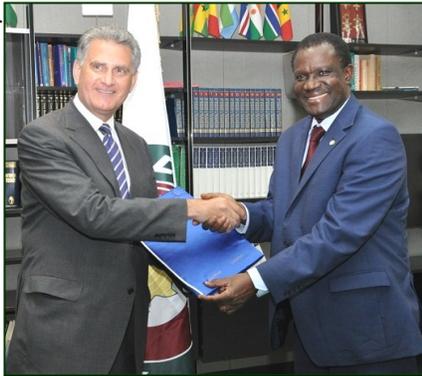
ECOWAS Bulletin

Volume 08

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## **UK ENVOY ACCREDITED AS COUNTRY'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO ECOWAS**

The President of the ECOWAS Commission, His Excellency Kadre Desire Ouedraogo, has praised the government of the United Kingdom for its contributions to the success of West Africa's integration project including its ongoing training assistance to the armed forces of Mali to bolster their capacity to discharge their mandate.



**(l-r); Ambassador Pocock receiving his letter of credence from President Ouedraogo**

The commendation came on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2013 during the accreditation of His Excellency, Dr. Andrew John Pocock, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Nigeria as the Kingdom's representative to ECOWAS at a brief ceremony at the Commission's headquarters.

The president also used the opportunity to reiterate the validity of the ECOWAS integration project and briefed the envoy on the successes that have been achieved in the areas of the harmonization of trade and other policies, the development of regional infrastructure to improve intra-community trade and the movement of community citizens in the spirit of the objectives of the organisation's founding fathers.

"There has been tremendous progress with the implementation of the regional protocol on the free movement of citizens resulting in a greater sense of Community citizenship as well as the development of telecommunications which has eased intra-community communication," the president told his guest.

While the president acknowledged some challenges to regional integration, he spoke glowingly of the successes that have been achieved.

"Our objective is to ultimately unite the region through various mechanisms," the president told the envoy, using the opportunity to solicit UK support for the ongoing effort to transform the African-led force in Mali into a UN mission.

In order to address the challenges of maritime security, the president said a two-day summit of the leaders of West and Central Africa will be held from 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in Yaounde, Cameroun to agree a joint strategy to combat the scourge of piracy in the two regions.

Responding, Dr. Pocock, who recently assumed duties in Nigeria, reiterated his country's commitment to work

with ECOWAS to realize the objectives of its founding fathers.

## **NATIONAL ORIENTATION AGENCY OF NIGERIA PARTNERS ECOWAS ON PEACE**

The ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mrs. Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, has reiterated ECOWAS' commitment to support peace initiatives by any Member State, which is consistent with the regional peace and security framework.

Mrs. Suleiman made the commitment while receiving the Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Mr. Mike Emery, on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013 to the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja.

The Commissioner noted that instability in one country can easily affect the development process in other countries, adding: "without peace in the region, there can be no development".

She said ECOWAS hailed the NOA's Essential Forum for Peace initiative, particularly the "Generation Next" - a component of the peace programme which involves the youth, who represent the region's future.

"Youths belong in a very vulnerable group and can be easily manipulated to cause disturbances in society. ECOWAS therefore welcomes this partnership, and will work



**Mr. Mike Emery presenting a NAO campaign banner to Commissioner Salamatu Suleiman.**



**(l-r); Mr. Cyril Ikoh, Prince Anene, Mr. Emery, Commissioner Salamatu Suleiman and Hajlya Elelu-Ahmed**

with you to achieve your peace goals”, the Commissioner told the visiting Director-General.

The NOA boss was at the Commission to strengthen relations with the organization over its recently launched initiative - the Essential Forum for Peace, and sought ECOWAS' partnership on the programme.

### **JAPAN SUPPORTS ECOWAS MISSION IN GUINEA BISSAU WITH 44, 800 US DOLLARS**

The Government of Japan has donated 44, 800 US dollars to ECOWAS in support of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea Bissau (ECOMIB).

The cheque for the grant was made on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja by the First Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Nigeria, Mr. Maruo Shin-ichi.

While receiving the donation on behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mrs. Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, reiterated ECOWAS commitment to the success of ECOMIB.

The grant will be used for the electrification of the Level 2 Hospital in Guinea Bissau, which caters for ECOWAS personnel in ECOMIB Headquarters as well as the local people.

Peace and stability will be one of the issues that will dominate the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) to be held in Japan in June this year and attended by Heads of States, ministers and high-level officials of African states and partner countries and organizations.

The official of the Government of Japan used the opportunity to stress the importance of deepening regional integration for effectively promoting African development.

Japan recently contributed six million dollars in emergency grant to help address the instability in the Sahel region to the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and the United Nations Trust Fund, particularly the Mission's land mine-sweeping activities.

Since 2000, Japan has contributed some 5.7 million US dollars to ECOWAS regional projects, including three million US dollars for the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) and some two million US dollars as contribution to regional capacity building of ECOWAS citizens and institutions on the Proliferation and Control of Small



**Mrs. Suleiman receiving the cheque from Mr. Shinichi**

Arms and Light Weapons at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Ghana.

### **ECOWAS CALL FOR ABOLITION OF 90-DAY STAY LIMIT FOR ECOWAS CITIZENS**

Two key provisions of the regional Protocol on free movement of persons, one of which imposes a 90-day limit for community citizens visiting other Member States and another imposing residency card requirements should be abolished under a new proposal by Heads of ECOWAS National Units, Civil Society and Immigration officials.



**Commissioner Hamid**

Under the 1979 regional flagship Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment, ECOWAS citizens are required to stay a maximum of 90 days on a visit to another Member State and obtain residence permit for stays beyond this period, a restriction that also applied to their personal cars.

The officials, after their two-day 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting which ended at the ECOWAS Commission's Abuja headquarters on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013, also recommended that the existing regional Travel Certificate be replaced in 2015 by an ECOWAS biometric National Identity Card.

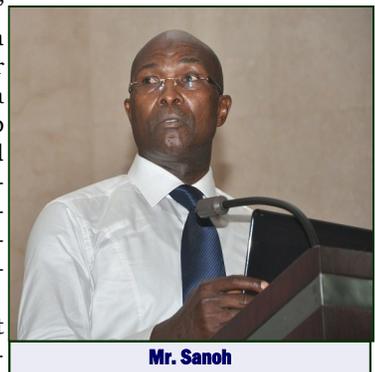
The free movement Protocol has made the Community the only visa-free region in Africa. However, impediments to its implementation include alleged discrimination, extortions and harassment of citizens, which constitute serious barriers to free movement.

The Abuja meeting, which reviewed the status of implementation of the protocol, identified the grey areas and recommended amendments and revision.

Participants argued that the abolition of the 90-day limit is consistent with the decision of the Mini-Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja in March 2000 and the 7<sup>th</sup> Forum of Ministers in charge of Security held in November 2009.

They also recommended that the clause “in accordance with national legislation” should be expunged from the Protocol,” and called for the establishment of “a Working Group to develop modalities for a secure and effective identification mechanism for community citizens residing within Member States as well as in border communities.”

In recommending that the Travel Certificate be re-

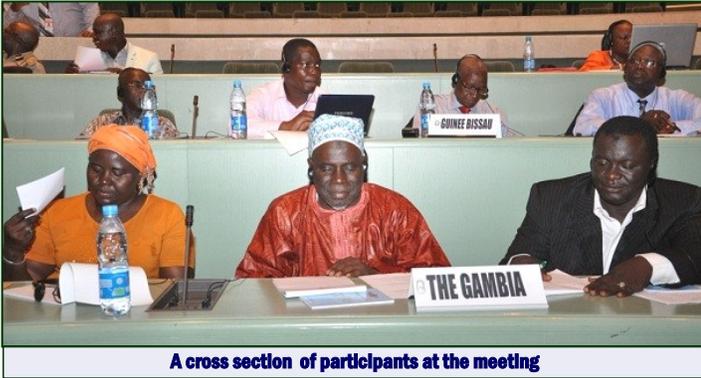


**Mr. Sanoh**

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A cross section of participants at the meeting

placed by the regional biometric national ID card, the meeting called on Member States to harmonize their divergent immigration laws and policies to ensure the successful deployment of the National ID cards.

Also, Member States yet to deploy the ECOWAS Passport were urged to expedite actions in this regard and “identify possible areas of intervention by the ECOWAS Commission.”

On the Right of Establishment, the meeting urged Member States to ensure equal treatment of their nationals and citizens of other Member States in the creation and management of enterprises or private companies.

Member States should also harmonize their investment codes with the provisions of the Supplementary Protocol which forbids any form of discrimination.

Regarding ECOWAS Citizenship, the meeting recommended the harmonization of national laws concerning citizenship and naturalization.

“Citizens of ECOWAS with dual nationality can, without exception, enjoy Community citizenship,” the meeting said, adding that “Dual nationality should no longer be considered to be a limiting factor.”

The meeting recommended the establishment of Information and Observation Centres to “ensure that citizens are aware of their rights, ensure compliance with the protocol and thereby reduce cases of harassment.” This will serve as a monitoring mechanism for the effective implementation of the protocol.

It further recommended the establishment of a Committee of Eminent Persons in this regard, and charged the ECOWAS Commission to provide the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

On asylum seekers and refugees, the meeting recommended the development of a document of “refugee” within the Community, which shall define the concept and serve as guideline for treatment of Community citizens who fall under this category.

Pending the development of a Supplementary Act on refugees, the meeting recommended that provision should be made for reintegration of migrants of ECOWAS extraction who fall under the “refugee” category, and provide them with relevant documents and safeguard them against discrimination. The recommendations are to be forwarded to the regional Ministers of security.

While opening the meeting, the ECOWAS Commissioner

for Customs, Trade, Mines, Industry, Free Movement and Tourism, Mr. Ahmed Hamid, reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to eliminating impediments to the successful implementation of the Free Movement Protocol.

He highlighted the urgent need to review some provisions of the text to ensure a seamless implementation, including redefinition of the ECOWAS Citizenship to take into account Community citizens in the Diaspora.

In his presentation, the Director of Free Movement/Tourism, Mr. Sanoh N’Faly listed proposals for deliberation on the review of the Protocol based on the outcome of the first regional Heads of National Units Meeting. Among them is the removal of legal, administrative and political limitations, including the incessant instability in the region as well as the need to institutionalize a forum for dialogue on Migration issues for the region.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Minourou Silla, of Cote d’Ivoire, who chaired the meeting on behalf of the Chairman of the Administration and Finance Committee, said the outcome of the meeting should facilitate the full realization of the benefits of the Free Movement Protocol.

### **HOLDS ITS FIRST CONSULTATIVE MEETING FOR THE 2016-2020 STRATEGIC DOCUMENT**

The ECOWAS Commission has launched preparations for its four year medium term strategic plan (2016-2020) with an inaugural consultative meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.



Stakeholders at the meeting included representatives of Member States, development partners, the media and Community citizens who during the meeting identified gaps in the design and development of the strategic documents, undertook a mid-term review and revalidated the framework used in developing the 2016-2020 Regional Strategic Plan.

The Director of the Strategic Planning Unit of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Essien Abel Essien described “2013 as the year to take stock of the progress of the implementation of this strategic plan and commence preparations for the next plan”.

He told the forum that in line with the bottom up approach of involving community citizens in the spirit of the ECOWAS vision 2020 for a people centred Community, the Commission has decided that “preparations for the next strategic plan should also be people centered”.

Participants reviewed the six strategic priorities embedded in the 2011-2015 Strategic Planning Document; which outlines a strategic roadmap for regional economic integration, and expressed their aspirations for the 2016-2020 strategic plan in areas including internal governance, institutional capacity, civil society and private sector involvement, crises management and prevention, policy harmonization, and

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A group photograph of participants at the meeting

regional security cooperation.

The exercise was intended to harvest the views and comments of the Community entities and citizens to facilitate the design for the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. Similar consultative sessions will be conducted in all other Member States over two years.

### **ECOWAS DEFENCE CHIEFS CALL FOR SEAMLESS TRANSFORMATION OF AFISMA INTO A UN OPERATION**

The ECOWAS Committee of Chief of Defence Staff (CCDS) ended an extraordinary meeting in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013, calling for effective cooperation and coordination to ensure a seamless transformation of the African-



General Hassan Lai

led International Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a United Nations field operation.

The two-day meeting, which discussed modalities for the transformation of the mission recommended that regional cooperation should be strengthened in the area of intelligence and information sharing, while troop-contributing countries should equip their staff as planned and continue their deployment.

The AFISMA mission, comprising troops from ECOWAS Member States and Chad is expected to be strengthened under a force generation plan discussed at the Yamoussoukro meeting.

The re-hating of AFISMA tentatively planned to take off by July 2013, envisages a troops' strength of 11,200 and 1,440 police officers for the robust assignment under the aegis of the UN to rid Mali of terrorism and criminal insurgency and also to restore the country's territorial integrity with support for the national armed forces.

The Yamoussoukro meeting, a follow-up to the 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup>

March 2013 meeting between AFISMA Headquarters and a UN technical team in Bamako, Mali, was briefed by the AFISMA Force Commander Maj.-Gen Shehu Abdoukadir, the Commander of the French SERVAL operation in Mali, Gen. Gregoire De Saint Quentin and the Commander of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, Col. Gnibanga Barro.

The UN military adviser on peace keeping Lt.-Gen. Babacar Gaye also made a presentation on the standard requirements for UN operations, while another UN official Mrs. Kathryn Jones discussed the UN policy on Human Rights protection, highlighting the UN policy against forces that violate human rights.

On Guinea-Bissau, the regional chiefs of defence staff called for the integration of civilian and military actions in ECOMIB; urgent inspection of troops and materials on ground, while ECOWAS should fulfill its commitments to troop-contributing countries.

The meeting also recommended that an ECOWAS technical team should visit Guinea Bissau for a technical assessment for the deployment of the naval component of the mission.

While closing the meeting on behalf of Cote d'Ivoire's Defence Minister Gen. Paul Kofi Kofi, the chairman of the CCDS Chairman General Soumaila Babayoko, reiterated his call at the opening ceremony that all hands must be on deck with sustained international engagement to rid Mali of the dangerous scourge of terrorism and criminality, threatening not only the country but the region and the rest of the world.

Speaking on behalf of the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mrs. Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, the Chief of Staff of ECOWAS Standby Force, Gen. Hassan Lai, commended France, the US, EU, the African Union and the UN for their understanding and continued support towards the resolution of the security situation in Mali.

The Chadian Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Brahim Sehidi Mahamat and the ECOWAS Special Representative in Mali Aboudou Cheaka Toure also attended the meeting.

### **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

*" Chickens that cackle too loudly, will hear the hawk coming."*

.....Sudan.....

### **EDITORIAL TEAM**

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