



KNOW YOUR ECOWAS



What is ECOWAS?

The Economic Community of West African States also known as ECOWAS was established on May 28, 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria, as a regional inter governmental organisation. It is headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria. The ECOWAS is currently made up of **15 member states** namely:

- ◆ Benin
- ◆ Burkina Faso
- ◆ Cape Verde
- ◆ Côte d'Ivoire
- ◆ Ghana
- ◆ Guinea
- ◆ Guinea Bissau
- ◆ Liberia
- ◆ Mali
- ◆ Niger
- ◆ Nigeria
- ◆ Senegal
- ◆ Sierra-Leone
- ◆ Gambia
- ◆ Togo

The ECOWAS has an overall aim of strengthening regional integration, promoting economic and political collaboration between the member states, and fostering peace and security in the region. ECOWAS operates officially in three languages: French, English, and Portuguese.



H.E Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the
Republic of Liberia
Chairperson of ECOWAS



H.E Marcel Alain de Souza
President of ECOWAS
Commission

How does the ECOWAS Operate?

The ECOWAS has three arms: the **Executive**, the **Legislature** and the **Judiciary**.

The Authority of Heads of State and Government made up of Heads of State and/or Government of the 15 member states is the highest body of the ECOWAS. The Authority is responsible for the general direction of the ECOWAS. The body determines the general policy and major guidelines of the organisation. It is chaired on rotation by the Head of one of its Member States who is appointed by other Heads of State and Government for a period of one-year. The Authority meets at least once a year in an ordinary session.

Next to the Authority of Heads of State is the **Council of Ministers**. The Council issues directives on coordination and harmonization of economic integration policies and makes recommendations to the Authority of Heads of State.

The **Executive** arm is headed by the President of **The ECOWAS Commission** (the Commission), who is appointed by the Authority of Heads of State and Government for a non-renewable period of four years. The President is assisted by a Vice President and 13 Commissioners. The Commission prepares and implements decisions made by the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Council of Ministers or the Parliament.

The **Legislative** arm of the Community is the Community Parliament (the Parliament) headed by the Speaker of the Parliament. The administrative functions of the Parliament are directed by the Secretary-General of the Parliament. The ECOWAS Parliament has 115 seats, which are distributed among the 15 ECOWAS Member States on the basis of their population.

The **Judicial** arm of the **Community is the Community Court of Justice**. The Court addresses complaints from citizens, member states and institutions of ECOWAS, as well as issues relating to defaulting nations, and ensures the interpretation and application of Community laws, protocols and conventions.

The court has jurisdiction to rule on fundamental human rights breaches of citizens of member states. The court is a permanent institution headed by a president, who is seconded by a chief registrar and seven judges.

Some Key Protocols and Frameworks of ECOWAS

The ECOWAS has several legal documents that member states are expected to conform. They are in the forms of Protocols, Conventions and Treaties. These documents give the ECOWAS, authority and the mandate to compel member states to adhere to its provisions.

Some of the documents are:

- The Lagos Treaty (1975)
- The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence, and Establishment (1979)
- The Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993)
- The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999)
- The ECOWAS Anti-Corruption Framework (1999)
- The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)
- The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008)

The Role of ECOWAS in Promoting Democracy and Good Governance

The ECOWAS offers a great opportunity for improving democracy and good governance, reducing inequality and fighting poverty in West Africa. This is made possible through a number of Protocols and frameworks of good practices that member states have signed up to. Key among these Protocols and frameworks for promoting good governance and democracy are the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (EPDGG) and the ECOWAS Anti-corruption Framework (EAF).

The PDGG and the EAF to which member states have signed up, are guiding principles for good governance, anti-corruption, accountability, fair distribution of resources and protection of human rights, among others in the ECOWAS region.

The ECOWAS Vision 2020

In June 2007, the Heads of State and Government in the sub-region, agreed and introduced the transformational ECOWAS Vision 2020. The ECOWAS Vision 2020 is aimed at transforming ECOWAS from an **'ECOWAS of States'** to an **'ECOWAS of People'**. It is an effort by the regional body to mobilise grassroots interest and support for regional intergration processes in the West Africa region. It sets a clear direction and goal to significantly raise the standard of living of the people through conscious and inclusive programmes that will guarantee a bright future for West Africa and shape the destiny of the region for many years to come.

Benefits of the ECOWAS to Citizens of Member States

Citizens of ECOWAS member states are generally referred to as ECOWAS citizens and are entitled to a number of benefits. These include:

- Freedom to move to, stay and or establish in any member state without visa requirements and strict restrictions,
- Opportunity to resort to the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice to seek redress to any violations without the obligation of having to exhaust local or national level remedies first,
- Opportunity of employment at the ECOWAS Commission or other ECOWAS establishments such as:
 - Community Court of Justice,
 - Community Parliament
 - ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)
 - West African Health Organisation (WAHO)
 - The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in West Africa (GIABA)

- **Some Specialised Agencies**
 - West African Monetary Agency (WAMA)
 - Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF)
 - The West African Power Pool (WAPP)
 - ECOWAS Brown Card
 - ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC)
 - ECOWAS Youth & Sports Development Centre (EYSDC)
 - West African Monetary Institute (WAMI)

How ECOWAS Citizens can Contribute to Improving the ECOWAS

ECOWAS Citizens can contribute through any of the following ways:

- Learning more about the ECOWAS and the commitments made by individual governments through ECOWAS Protocols and Frameworks and holding their governments accountable to those commitments
- Educating other citizens about the ECOWAS
- Abiding by community principles as spelt out in protocols and frameworks
- Disseminating ECOWAS's Protocols and Frameworks, particularly ECOWAS Protocols on Democracy, Good Governance and Economic Fair Redistribution
- Raising issues related to ECOWAS at national and regional level
- Fighting against tribal and ethnics-based considerations by promoting intercultural tolerance for peace building across ECOWAS region
- Sharing experiences and initiatives to foster sustainable development of the sub-region.

About MFWA & National Partners

The MFWA is a regional independent non-governmental organization. It is the biggest and most influential media development and freedom of expression advocacy organisation in West Africa with national partner organisations in all 16 countries of the region. In the last 19 years, the MFWA and its partners have successfully promoted freedom of expression rights, media professionalism, and media-led advocacy for peace building, and participatory governance across West Africa. Below are the names of the partners and the countries in which they are based:

Benin

l'Observatoire de la Déontologie et de l'Ethique dans les Medias (ODEM)

Burkina Fasso

National de Presse Norbert Zongo (CNP-NZ)

Cote d'Ivoire

l'Observatoire de la Liberté de la Presse, de l'Ethique et de la Déontologie (OLPED)

The Gambia

Gambia Press Union (GPU)

Guinea Bissau

Sindicato De Jornalistas e Tecnicos De Comunicacao Social Guinea Bissau (SINJOTECS)

Mauritania

Regroupement de la Presse Mauritanienne(RPM)

Liberia

Centre for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP)

Mali

Maison de la Presse du Mali (MP)

Niger

Observatoire Nigerien Independant des Medias(ONIMED)

Nigeria

International Press Centre (IPC)

Sierra Leone

Media Reform Co-ordinating Group-Sierra Leone

Senegal

La Convention Des Jeunes Reporters Du Senegal (CJRS)

Togo

l'Institut des Médias pour la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (IM2DH)



Benin
French



Burkina Faso
French



Cape Verde
Portuguese



Côte d'Ivoire
French



Ghana
English



Guinea
French



Guinea Bissau
Portuguese



The Gambia
English



Liberia
English



Mali
French



Niger
French



Nigeria
English



Senegal
French



Sierra Leone
English



Togo
French

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