



INTERNATIONAL ALERT

COMMUNIQUE OF THE FIRST ECOWAS-CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION

Preamble

1. From 30 May - 1 June 2003, a Consultation on Strengthening the Human Security Capacities of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and West African Civil Society was organised in Abuja, Nigeria by the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and International Alert (IA).
2. Based on ECOWAS' stated commitment towards establishing a partnership with and drawing upon the available expertise and experience in civil society, the Consultation sought to examine the bases of and modalities for providing effective support towards strengthening human security mechanisms of ECOWAS.
3. Participants at the Consultation included senior representatives of ECOWAS institutions, civil society representatives, policy and academic experts, and representatives of bilateral and multi-lateral funding agencies.
4. The Consultation was addressed by the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Professor Ali Nouhoune Diallo, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security in ECOWAS, General Cheikh Oumar Diarra.
5. The Consultation received presentations from experts on a variety of geo-political and thematic issues necessary to assure human security in West Africa. In particular, the participants at the Consultation considered the relationship between ECOWAS and the New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD). They also received reports on and considered the status of human security in different countries comprised in the four zones into which ECOWAS has been divided for the purpose of monitoring and early warning on security issues in West Africa.
6. Participants warmly received reports of the Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja on 28 May, 2003 and commended West African leaders for their commitment to the cause of regional integration as reflected in the effort to restore peace and stability in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia.
7. The consultation also noted the progress made in the Community Parliament, and participants agreed that the result of the consultation should be officially presented to the Speaker with a view to forging

stronger links between the Community Parliament and civil society institutions in West Africa.

The Challenges

8. The consultation analysed the human security situation in West Africa according to the conditions in:

- States experiencing conflict;
- States emerging from conflict;
- States in various stages of transition to stable democracy;
- States in the process of consolidating democracy;
- States facing various challenges to their human security situation and,

considered that the central challenges for human security and sustainable development in West Africa include poverty, political and economic governance, education, youth, conflict, small arms proliferation and trafficking, manipulation of religion, citizenship and identity issues, gender, environmental degradation, migration and the diaspora, globalisation and health, including Malaria, Tuberculosis and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

- The consultation also noted that the security situation in the immediate neighbouring states might impact on ECOWAS member states.
- The consultation also noted the interconnectedness of conflicts in West Africa, thereby underscoring the need for collective regional response.

Proposals and Mechanisms for Implementation

9. Civil society representatives strongly endorsed the commitment of ECOWAS to the involvement of the people and the human resources and expertise of West Africans in the processes and institutions of regional integration.

10. In acknowledging ECOWAS' coordinating role for the implementation of the NEPAD action plan in the sub-region, the Consultation emphasised the importance of devising appropriate measures to address the human security challenges in West Africa. In this process, the Consultation underscored the utility of existing ECOWAS treaties, protocols and mechanisms.

11. After extensive deliberations, the Consultation resolved on a number of mechanisms and processes for strengthening human security capacities in the sub-region. These include:

- the establishment of national and regional monitoring mechanisms on the status of human security in West Africa using the zonal structures of the observation bureaux for early warning within ECOWAS;
- a review of the processes for civil society accreditation with ECOWAS, especially the 1994 Council Decision in this regard;

- the creation of a civil society unit within the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS;
- an audit of status of implementation, including legislative domestication of ECOWAS treaties, protocols and decisions;
- the creation of an independent civil society secretariat to facilitate liaison between West Africa's civil society organisations and ECOWAS institutions;
- a regular Peoples' Assembly of West Africa's peoples and organisations on the back of the Ministerial Council meeting preceding the annual summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS;
- a joint ECOWAS-institutions-civil society task force to help in developing a strategic plan for safeguarding human security in West Africa and an operational and resource mobilisation plan for implementing such strategy;
- investigate alternative creative mechanisms for funding ECOWAS' human security strategy and capacity building and, within this context, explore the feasibility of local and external resource mobilisation among West Africans;
- promoting the benefits of ECOWAS for West Africa's peoples, such as the ECOWAS passport and visa-free travel in the sub-region;
- popularising ECOWAS in the consciousness of West Africa's peoples and particularly youth through appropriate programmes including commemorations of anniversaries, essay competitions, and popular media;
- active promotion of Community citizenship by ECOWAS, member states and civil society organisations.

Way Forward

12. For the purpose of carrying forward these proposals and maintaining the momentum created by it, the Consultation agreed to initiate an *ad-hoc* group to work with the Executive Secretariat, other ECOWAS institutions, the authorities of designated host states for ECOWAS summit meetings and the peoples and civil society of West Africa.
13. The Committee's terms of reference are: building up contacts, wider consultation and partnerships for the purpose of realising the objectives set out in Paragraph 11.

The nominated members of the *Ad-hoc* committee are:

Tajudeen AbdulRaheem – Pan-African Movement

Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson – WILDAF West Africa, Togo
Nana K.A. Busia, jnr - Ghana
Kayode Fayemi - Nigeria
Adelino Handem – Lusophone WA
Saran Daraba Kaba – MRWPNET- Guinea
Chidi Anselm Odinkalu – Funding Agencies
Souleyman Sagna – RADDHO-WARIPNET Francophone WA
Secretary-General, Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs, Ghana
Two ECOWAS representatives.

The ad-hoc committee is mandated to co-opt other people with relevant expertise.

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