

**DECLARATION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY, PRIVATE SECTOR, SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS, IN THE NAME OF THE 'ECOWAS COMMUNITY CITIZENS' MADE THIS DAY  
30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020**

**“FOR ECOWAS OF THE PEOPLES”,**

**WE, THE CITIZENS OF ECOWAS, FROM CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, POLITICAL PARTIES, TRADE UNIONS, RELIGIOUS OR LAY MOVEMENTS, WOMEN AND YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS, INTERVENING AT THE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS, RECOGNIZED BY THE ECOWAS TREATY AS “ECOWAS COMMUNITY CITIZENS”;**

**CONSIDERING** the COVID19 pandemic that has occurred in ECOWAS Member States since early 2020 and the socio-economic and political consequences on ECOWAS Citizens;

**CONSIDERING** the Security crises manifesting in insurgency, banditry and other forms of criminalities in the Sahelian region of ECOWAS, and the drastic consequences on the peoples, citizens and societies of ECOWAS;

**CONSIDERING** the ongoing and consequent democratic crises of poor governance, constitutional changes and external destabilization in some ECOWAS Member States;

**CONSIDERING** the efforts made around the World by some Governments and their Peoples to learn from the COVID 19 crisis in order to bring about the necessary changes governance, infrastructure, resource management as well as improved production and consumption patterns;

**CONSIDERING** the Treaty founding ECOWAS, the Revised Treaty and its various Protocols, Regulations, Directives, etc. voluntarily adopted and signed by the Heads of State of ECOWAS, enshrining the (i) citizenship of nationals of ECOWAS member states, (ii) the free movement of persons, goods and services, (iii) the right of establishment and residence, (iv) the right to health, education, food, freedom of expression, democracy, justice, etc.;

**CONSIDERING** the adherence of ECOWAS Member States to international Protocols and Rights enshrining the self-determination of peoples and their fundamental rights to democracy and social justice;

**REGRETTING** the non-realization of Vision 2020, consisting in moving from "ECOWAS of States" to "ECOWAS of Peoples", and which we consider as a broken promise, lost opportunity and a missed appointment between the Peoples and the leaders of the Community;

**REGRETTING** the rather weak technical and financial capacity for action and intervention of the ECOWAS executive bodies (Commission, Community Parliament, Community Court of Justice, EBID, West African Health Organization, etc.) support to the citizens and peoples of ECOWAS affected by terrorism, hunger and malnutrition, poor governance, COVID 19;

**DENOUNCING** the dysfunctions at the highest decision-making level of ECOWAS in response to crises;

**DENOUNCING VIGOROUSLY** the big delay in key regional integration issues such as the Common Currency (ECO), symbol of regional monetary sovereignty, which has been deliberately torpedoed and diverted from its original intent and purpose and plagued by technical unpreparedness, lack

of sincerity and political will as well as a possible external influence and manipulation, almost wiping out decades of efforts and resources dedicated thereto;

**DENOUNCING** the excessive waste of Community resources by the Governing bodies (Statutory, Meetings of Ministers and Heads of State) of the Community;

**DENOUNCING** the muzzling of speech, exercised on professional officials of the Institutions;

**DENOUNCING** the strong politicization of the Statutory Appointees of the ECOWAS Institutions that represent not the aspirations and interests of the Community Citizens but those of the President and/or the political parties in their own Countries;

**NOTING REGRETTABLY** the persistent and needless altercations and closure of businesses belonging to Community Citizens in some member state, and the feeble attention and role played by ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, including the Commission and Regional Statutory Agencies towards a permanent solution thereof;

**NOTING REGRETTABLY** the overstretched closure of land borders by some Member States, including the perennial litany of Non-tariff barriers noticeable across the borders and corridors of ECOWAS which has defiled all solutions due to the lack of commitment by Member States, and the negative implications thereof for regional economic integration and food security in particular;

**NOTING REGRETTABLY** that apparently, ECOWAS is surely, slowly but sadly moving away from the path traced by the founding fathers and followed by the peoples, to become a Club of Heads of State and Government, and disconnected from the reality experienced by their people and whose legitimacy is, to say the least, questionable;

**CONCERNED** by the crumbling image of ECOWAS within the Community and the growing sense of rejection among citizens, which could in the final analysis undermine the legitimacy of the Institution and compromise the appropriation of its policies by the latter;

**CONSIDERING** that all citizens of ECOWAS are the first and direct contributors to the Community Levy, a collective means of financing Community Development Programs (Infrastructures, Health, Humanitarian, Agriculture and Food, Education, Sports, Social Protection and Justice, Peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance);

**BELIEVING** that Socio-professional, Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations have a right of scrutiny over the management of Community Levy and other resources;

**REGRETTING** the non-realization of Vision 2020, which consists in moving from an "ECOWAS of States" to "ECOWAS of Peoples";

**DETERMINED** to build and carry a true People's Vision of ECOWAS, in which citizens are listened to, heard, involved and empowered, so as to enable them to play their role as actors in the economic and social development of the community;

**AWARE** of the enormous potential and human, cultural and natural resources of the ECOWAS Member States, which is poorly tapped and valued for the well-being of men, women, young people and peoples of ECOWAS;

**OBSERVING** the negative implications of the exodus of trained Professionals and illegal labour migration of Youths and Women in the region as a 'brain drain' which affects the economy of ECOWAS Member States where they could have been gainfully employed to pay taxes and contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the region.

**CONSIDERING** the youthfulness of the West African population, of which over 60% of ECOWAS citizens are under 35 years of age, and the need to manage it with modern methods of governance based on listening, respect, a culture of results and innovation;

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** the many challenges facing the community at this precise moment in its evolution, particularly the political crisis in Mali, directly borne out of the legitimate demands of the Malian people for virtuous governance or democratic management of the country;

**STRONGLY SUPPORTING** the Malian people in their struggle for much eluded peace, security, true democracy and economic and social development;

**OBSERVING** that the use of excessive, disproportionate and dangerous economic sanctions against the Malian people, as well as the pressure exerted on those involved in the crisis may result in making unrealistic commitments in view of the depth of the security, institutional, economic and social crisis affecting this country;

**MINDFUL** of the ongoing political tensions in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, obviously associated with political agenda and disruption in the Constitution towards third term extension of office, and which could lead to a serious breakdown of peace and stability in these Countries and in the Community at large, and which could further be exacerbated by the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, terrorism and the global economic crisis;

**ON THIS DAY, AUGUST 30, 2020, EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERNS TO THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS, AND HEREBY MAKE THE FOLLOWING DEMANDS:**

1. Definitively and decisively prohibit, proscribe, outlaw, and/or disallow any change, alteration and/or modification in the Constitution or any prevailing Statute of an ECOWAS Member State, in its nature or period, aimed or intended at making any Head of State eligible for seeking a third term in office.
2. Depoliticize the ECOWAS Commission, as a matter of urgency, by reducing the number of Statutory Appointees to a maximum of five (5) within the Commission (instead of the 16 budget-eaters currently representing each Member State): One President, three Vice-Presidents (that may be referred to as Commissioners) and an Auditor General, recruited competitively in the Member States (in turn). This becomes very imperative as a tool for prudence and effective saving and management of meagre resources to allow for regional developmental projects that would benefit the Community citizens.
3. Bring about fundamental reforms of the ECOWAS Court of Justice by promoting the access of citizens and peoples to the Court through the expansion of its jurisdiction beyond

strictly human rights, as well as an efficient judicial administration with the recruitment of a maximum of two Statutory Judges (a President and a Vice-President) will focus on the organization of judicial sessions (one judge appointed per Member State) for the benefit of citizens and peoples and the protection of their fundamental rights;

4. Consider immediate setting up and making functional the Economic and Social Council of ECOWAS as an emanation of representatives of Socio-professional Organizations and Civil Society of ECOWAS Member States active as an autonomous consultative body on economic, social and development subjects of the community;
5. Reactivate and fully implement the ECOWAS Community Development Project (CDP) which was articulated and designed by all shades of Community Citizens through the supervision of the Commission, with the objective of serving as an instrument for infrastructure-driven and growth-oriented region founded on wealth creation and sustainable development.
6. Create an institutionalized consultative framework which enables the highest Authorities and key ECOWAS officials, including the current Chairman, the President of the Commission and the Commissioners of the sectoral Departments, would come once a year to present and report to ECOWAS citizens on the achievements of integration and the state of the Community;
7. Modernize governance processes in ECOWAS and use modern tools and innovations for the holding of consultative meetings of decision-making bodies in order to reduce costs and save resources to be reinvested in the Community Development Projects for the benefit of the weakest and most vulnerable (food, health, water, education, etc.);
8. Support and strengthen EIDB, ECOWAS Agriculture, Food Development Funds (ECOWADF) and all related Institutions of ECOWAS to improve investment in the agriculture and food security sector so as to reduce the impending food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition which are immediate consequences of insecurity, climate change and revenue shortfalls exacerbated by Covid-19;
9. Direct attention towards full industrialization of the region through articulation and activation of a regional Trade Policy and implement of Industrial policies matched with appropriate budgetary allocations in order to create the enabling environment for gainful employment generation, in particular for women and youth;
10. Permanently abolish road harassment, bullying, extortion and humiliation suffered by the citizens of the Community at the borders and along the corridors and guarantee the free movement of goods and persons in accordance with the ECOWAS Treaty and the Protocol on Free Movement of persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment;
11. Fully and unrestrictedly repay into ECOWAS accounts the Community Levy paid daily by consumers in ECOWAS Member States and manage these funds in a transparent manner;

12. Invoke appropriate sanctions against repressive, xenophobic and racial statements or actions by individuals, associations and political organizations against ECOWAS Community citizens residents in other Member States;
13. Protect as a priority the interests of ECOWAS Citizens against individual and collective interests within and outside ECOWAS, or unscrupulous Financial Institutions, Countries and/or groups that intend to surreptitiously scuttle the collective interests of the region and her citizens including the subtle, but vain, arm-twisting of the planned Eco currency;
14. Put in place coercive mechanisms encouraging or obliging large groups of West African financial capital, which largely benefit the peoples and citizens of ECOWAS, to contribute to the financing of ECOWAS community Project and other growth strategies and programs.
15. Reconsider restraint on the use of excessive, disproportionate and dangerous economic sanctions against the Malian people so as to avoid sending the innocent citizens further down the ladder of poverty and degradation already inflicted upon them by insurgency, institutional, economic and social crisis that have bedeviled the Country long before now;

As Socio-Professional, Civil Society, Private Sector and Citizens organizations, we shall henceforth take active part in the affairs of the Community and will ensure effective follow-up of the implementation of this Declaration.

While expressing confidence in the ability of the Heads of State and Government, we further count on their wisdom to ensure the continuity of the implementation of integration in accordance with the aspirations of the founding fathers of ECOWAS.

We pledge as citizens and peoples of ECOWAS to take all responsibility to collaborate and support the Authority of Heads of State in accelerating the process of building the ECOWAS of peoples where rights and freedoms are guaranteed, but will oppose all attempts to reduce the Community to a Club.

**August 30, 2020**