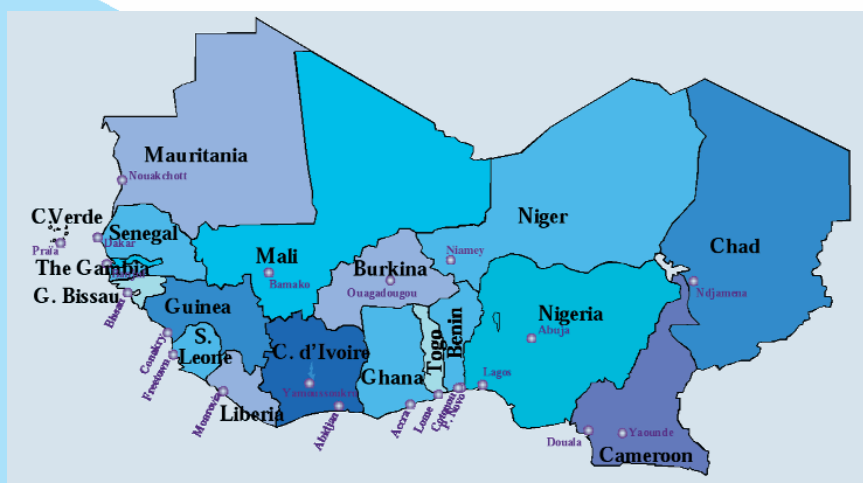


Thematic Meeting of the  
Strategy and Policy Group

*“Medium and Long-Term Development  
Perspectives of West Africa”*

Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), 29 June 2006



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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For the second year in a row the Sahel and West Africa Club has organised a thematic meeting of its **Strategy and Policy Group (SPG)** in Africa in response to the request made by its partners. The aim of the meeting was to have an exchange of views on topics of common interest, while leaving administrative and budgetary issues to the plenary meeting held in an OECD Member country (January 2007). This gathering was also the opportunity to present the main points of the *Intergenerational Forum on Endogenous Governance in West Africa*, which had just ended (26-28 June), and in which certain members of the SPG (Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland) had participated as observers during the restitution of the workshops and the closing ceremony.

The SPG meeting coincided with the Sahel and West Africa Club's (SWAC) 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To celebrate this event, the SWAC decided to organise a discussion panel with its regional and development partners on the *Medium and Long-Term Development Perspectives of West Africa*. This panel discussion, reflecting the strategic approach adopted by the Club, of which past activities have included: (i) the review and analysis of the main retrospective and prospective studies on West Africa; and (ii) the organization of a discussion panel on *Regional Development Perspectives in West Africa, Regional Integration and the Evolution of ECOWAS' Role*, jointly prepared in June 2005 with ECOWAS for their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A summary of the main issues raised during this symposium was published under the title "Medium and Long-Term Regional Development Perspectives in West Africa" (SWAC, December 2005).

These discussions held since 2004 provide the conceptual framework for an Annual Report to be published in 2007-2008 in cooperation with ECOWAS and other regional and international organisations. In addition to the retrospective analysis of the situation of West Africa and of ECOWAS, it should address major emerging issues for the region.

Since the creation of the Club 30 years ago in 1976, West Africa has undergone tremendous cultural, social, institutional, economic and political upheaval. To illustrate this, the SWAC chose to invite to this SPG meeting a panel of representatives of public authorities, West African civil society, and regional, continental and international institutional organisations working in the region in order for them to share their analysis of the future of the region with the SPG members and the other participants. These representatives all have one thing in common: a long-standing commitment to the development of Africa, as actors and observers in this changing region. The SWAC therefore deemed it interesting and pertinent to ask them to structure their report around the three following points:

- 1) Current situation in West Africa;
- 2) Medium and long-term development perspectives of the region;
- 3) Partnership with the Sahel and West Africa Club.

There were approximately 30 participants representing 13 countries from the South and the North (including eight SPG member countries), members of regional organisations (AfDB, ECOWAS, the CILSS, the WAEMU, UNOWA, UNECA), international organisations (Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation, AIA, World Bank, UNDP), civil society (West African Women's Network, Youth Coordination Group, ROPPA), and research institutions (African University Institute, University of Ouagadougou) as well as the mayor of Ouagadougou (the list of participants is annexed hereto).

The panel was introduced by Mr. Charles Goerens, President of the Club, Mr. Normand Lauzon, Director of the SWAC, Ms. Sunhilt Schumacher, Deputy Director, and Mr. Massaër Diallo, Head of the Governance, Conflict Dynamics, Peace and Security Unit. Mr. Laurent Bossard, Head of the Local Development and Regional Integration Unit of the SWAC, and Mr. Jean Sibiri Zoundi, Head of the Rural Transformation and Sustainable Development Unit also participated.

Following the introductions, Ms. Schumacher announced her retirement on 31 July 2006, stressing her interest in the region and commending the work of the Sahel and West Africa Club and its partners.

This document summarises discussions led during this meeting. It is structured around three main parts:

1. The first part summarises the introductory speeches made by Mr. Goerens and Mr. Lauzon along with Mr. Diallo's review of the conclusions of the *Inter-generational Forum on Endogenous Governance*. It provides a list of the different speakers and presentations.
2. The second part sums up discussions and speeches on several subjects: the stakes for the West African population; women and youth in West African society; and the socio-political and economic situations within the framework for analysis agreed to by all participants (current situation, issues and challenges in West Africa). Each session was followed by an exchange between participants, which is summarised in this document.
3. The third part addresses different perspectives for West Africa as discussed by the panellists and recommendations made. It also reviews current and future partnerships with the organisations represented.

## I. PRESENTATION OF PANELS

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The SPG thematic meeting was jointly chaired by Mr. Goerens and Mr. Lauzon. Due to a last minute commitment, the Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka, was unable to participate. His introductory speech was nevertheless presented by Mr. Lauzon and distributed to participants. Furthermore, Ms. Thérèse Pujolle, President of the Club from 2002 to 2005<sup>1</sup>, sent a word of encouragement to the SWAC and its partners.

### 1.1 *The Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)*

Mr. Goerens gave a brief introduction by highlighting the progress made by West African countries over the last 30 years. He stressed that the prospective strategic thinking approach for the region tied in perfectly with the international agenda, especially in the context of preparations for the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between the European Union and West Africa.

Mr. Diallo went on to present the work of the *Inter-generational Forum on Endogenous Governance*. He recalled the creation of the Forum, following on from the recommendations made by the Conakry Workshop organised in March 2005 on *Capitalising on Endogenous Capacities*, and the *Forum on Political Parties, Media and Civil Society* in June 2005 in Cotonou. These two regional meetings thus led to the emergence of two regional groups: the West African Women's Group and the Youth Coordination Group, which actively participated in the preparation and organisation of the Inter-generational Forum in Ouagadougou.

He then presented the main objectives of this Forum:

- Disaggregating experiences and capacities, promoting a regional approach, communicating and building on achievements and the potential for endogenous governance and conflict prevention;
- Developing inter-generational partnerships contributing to the communication, updating and capitalising of the region's capacities;
- Within this view, defining strategies to combine the skills and capacities of different generations in order to face the previously identified challenges effectively;
- Proposing initiatives that contribute to the initiation and establishment of modes of governance in Africa that is equipped with the available capacities within the region and external contributions;
- Determining the roles and responsibilities of each of the categories of key players in the promotion and implementation of this participatory approach.

Mr. Diallo underlined several recommendations as well as the main points of the discussions led during the Forum, including:

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<sup>1</sup> Their respective speeches appear in Volume 2.

- The need to continue inter-generational dialogue;
- The situation and status of women: using combined action to help ensure that what has already been achieved is implemented; acknowledging equity and equality in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for women;
- For young people, the importance of education, training and citizenship and regional education;
- The role of knowledge in society;
- The need to lay the foundations of a network for governance firmly anchored in the realities of the region;
- The need to involve ECOWAS in this strategic thinking.

The discussions made it possible to address important issues for which the Club and its partners should continue to provide support.

Having presented Mr. Akasaka's speech, Mr. Lauzon, reiterated the importance of encouraging discussions on the future of West Africa, stressing that the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary was an important opportunity for conducting this kind of debate. Thanking the panellists present, he underlined the fact that the Club maintains close partnerships with most of the organisations represented at the meeting. He ended by briefly recalling the new initiatives that will be carried out with ECOWAS as from 2007:

- Within the framework of their partnership, the ECOWAS and SWAC Secretariats decided to launch a joint website on West Africa, which will be based in Abuja. This site should provide easier access to information about the region;
- The second project concerns the publication of an Annual Report on West Africa from 2007 onwards, produced jointly with ECOWAS. It will be comprised of two parts: 1) The current situation in West Africa; 2) Focus on two major topics that have marked 2006: the challenges of food security and migration movements. Several partners will be associated with this initiative.

## ***1.2 Presentation of speeches***

The panel took place in two sessions, with a series of presentations followed by discussions on the issues raised.

### First session:

- 1. The Current Situation in West Africa, ECOWAS Agenda and Partnership with the SWAC**, by the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr. Mohamed Chambas (text presented by Mr. William Kaniyrige, Head of the Executive Secretary's Private Office).
- 2. Demography and Development: Where is West Africa coming from? Where is it now? Where is it going?** by Prof. Dieudonné OUEDRAOGO, Demographer and Dr. Zourkaléini Younoussi, Ph.D.
- 3. Medium- and Long-Term Development Perspectives**, by Mr. Hamza Ahmadou Cissé, Permanent Secretary to the President of the WAEMU Commission.
- 4. The Sahel and West Africa: Current Situation and Prospects in terms of Food Security, National Resource Management and Desertification Control**, by Mr. Issa Martin Bikienga, Deputy Executive Secretary of the CILSS.



5. **Future of the West African Region: the Bank's Vision and Intervention Strategy**, by Ms. Sylvie Condé, Senior Economist, ADB.
6. **West Africa: Situation and Medium- and Long-Term Perspectives**, by Ms. Joséphine Ouedraogo, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).
7. **Role of Women in West Africa: Current situation and perspectives**, by Ms. Bintou Sanankoua, Researcher, West Africa Women's Group.
8. **OECD/Sahel and West Africa Club, 1976-2006: Thirty years of Exemplary Partnership between Policy-Making and Research Communities**, by Prof. A.I. Asiwaju, Researcher.

*Written message by Mrs. Thérèse Pujolle for the Club's 30th Anniversary Celebration*

Second session:

1. **Evolution of Ouagadougou over the last 30 years**, by Mr. Simon Compaoré, Mayor of Ouagadougou.
2. **West Africa: Current situation and medium- and long-term perspectives**, by Mr. Georg Charpentier, UNDP Resident Representative in Burkina Faso.
3. **Situation in West Africa**, by Mr. Célestin Bado, Representative of the World Bank in Burkina Faso.
4. **West Africa: Review of the Current Situation and Medium- and Long-Term Perspectives**, by Mr. NDiogou Fall, President of ROPPA.
5. **Trends and Prospects of the Role and Place of Youth in the Economic, Political, Social, and Family Life in West Africa: Changes, Progress and Challenges to Address**, by Mr. Mody Ndiaye, West Africa Youth Coordinating Unit.
6. **Evolution of the Private Sector in West Africa**, by Ms. Aimée Mendy, Director of Public Relations of the African Industrial Association (AIA).
7. **West Africa: Review of the Current Situation and Medium- and Long-Term Perspectives**, by Ms. Marie-Thérèse Aïssata Keïta, Principal Advisor for Human Rights, Representing the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA).
8. **Culture, Governance and Development**, by Mr. Raymond Weber, Director of the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency

## II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS: CURRENT SITUATION, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR WEST AFRICA

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This summary outlines the main points raised during the presentations made by the speakers (see Volume 2) and the discussions that followed. These are organised according to four major themes:

1. Some challenges for West African settlement;
2. Women and youth in West African society;
3. The socio-political situation in West Africa;
4. Regional economic development: some options and strategies.

Given the breadth of the presentations and speeches, it is not possible to communicate them in full in this summary record. However, readers may refer to the Volume 2 for the full texts. The Club has also included some maps taken from the Atlas on Regional Integration in West Africa<sup>2</sup> in order to better illustrate remarks. Finally, with reference to the first panel organised in Abuja in 2005 on Development Perspectives of West Africa, readers will find throughout this summary the principal strategic issues raised there.

### *2.1 Some stakes for the West African population*

#### *2.1.1 Specific population growth*

Little information exists about the state of the population of Africa before the 1960s. It is believed that the African population stagnated or even decreased between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The population began to increase once more from the 1920s and especially the 1950s due to improvements in sanitary and medical conditions. Mortality rates have considerably fallen; far more so than fertility rates, which have remained high, falling from seven children per woman to less than six today, as a result of the decline in infant mortality, urbanisation and schooling.

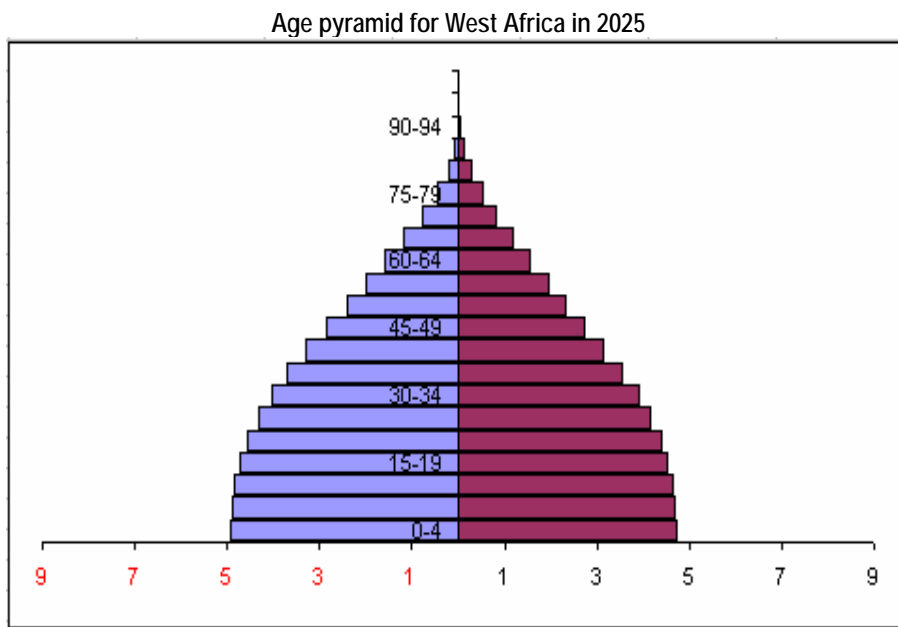
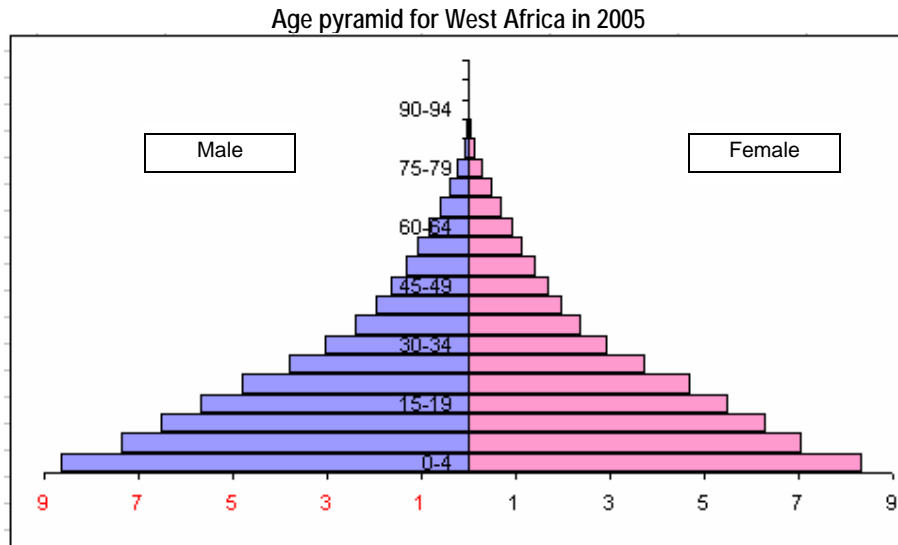
The continent has experienced one of the highest population growth rates in the world, and counts 14% of the world's population. Following these trends, the West African population (29.1% of the population of the whole continent) has seen growth rates of almost 3% per year, increasing from 40 million people in 1930 to 290 million in 2005. This trend is expected to continue over the coming decades: the regional population could reach 430 million people by 2020 and exceed half a billion by 2040.

West African cities have absorbed two thirds of the population growth recorded between 1960 and 1990. Today they are home to 45% of the population. Overall, the region remains less urbanised than the rest of the world. Urban growth was initially fed mainly by population movements from the countryside. This is no longer the case: the population of West African cities is now primarily increasing (around 70% to 80%) due to births in urban areas; the number of children born in cities is increasing as the urban population grows. Urban growth is no longer as rapid as in the 1970s and 1980s, but it will continue.

The age structure of the population is largely a result of fertility and mortality rates. The principal characteristic of this structure is that the African population is young and getting younger: the proportion of those under 15 years of age increased from 42.1% in 1950 to 44.1% in 2005. At the top of the pyramid, those over 60 years of age are also more numerous than they were 50 years ago; however, the proportion of this category in the total population has fallen slightly from 5.1% in 1950 to 4.8% in 2005.

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<sup>2</sup> The Atlas on Regional Integration is an ECOWAS and SWAC / OECD initiative. Classified in four series (population, land, economy, environment), the chapters will be produced gradually throughout 2006/07 and available on line at [www.atlas-westafrica.org](http://www.atlas-westafrica.org).



Source: United Nations (2005)

These trends are expected to continue well into the future with the population increasing at a faster pace than that of the world's population; atypically, this growth will concern both the urban and rural populations. Within this context, it is likely that the urban population will increase more rapidly than the rural population and will represent around 60% of the total population by 2020 to 2025. The fertility rate should continue to decrease and life expectancy is likely to increase to 60 years by 2050. It is in fact estimated that by 2050, over 10% of the population will be over 60 years of age.

### 2.1.2 Population challenges

These trends raise a certain number of issues and challenges for the future of West Africa and the continent as a whole. These include:

- a) Ensuring better management of urban areas and of relations between large and small cities and towns

The example of Ouagadougou is a good illustration. In 1960, there were 60,000 inhabitants, compared to 1.2 million 40 years later. The challenges facing this city are the same as those in the principal Sahelian urban areas: a demographic explosion with a high proportion of young people (70% are under 20 years of age); a shortage of housing and food; low employment rate; and an informal sector representing almost 30% of the economy. The city is currently expanding: it has received many Togolese and Ivorian refugees, and even French people from Côte d'Ivoire.

- b) Anticipating the ageing population

One of the difficulties facing demographers in West Africa is the lack of historical depth for making relevant projections. On a global level, the proportion of young people could decrease from 28% to 20% between 2005 and 2050 and the proportion of those over 60 years of age could increase from 10% to 22%. In 2050, the proportion of young people could still be 30% in sub-Saharan Africa, 29% in West Africa, 21% in North Africa, but only 15% in Europe. Its young population will long remain an exception in relation to other parts of the world (except for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa). However, the population is slowly starting to age in West Africa, which prompts a need to begin to anticipate this trend.

- c) Ensuring a secular decrease in the mortality rate

Health issues are related to the spread of HIV/AIDS, meningitis and measles epidemics, etc. The maternal mortality rate remains high, as does that for children between zero and five years of age.

- d) Ensuring a better understanding of the relationships between population, development, resources and the environment

## Strategic Questions

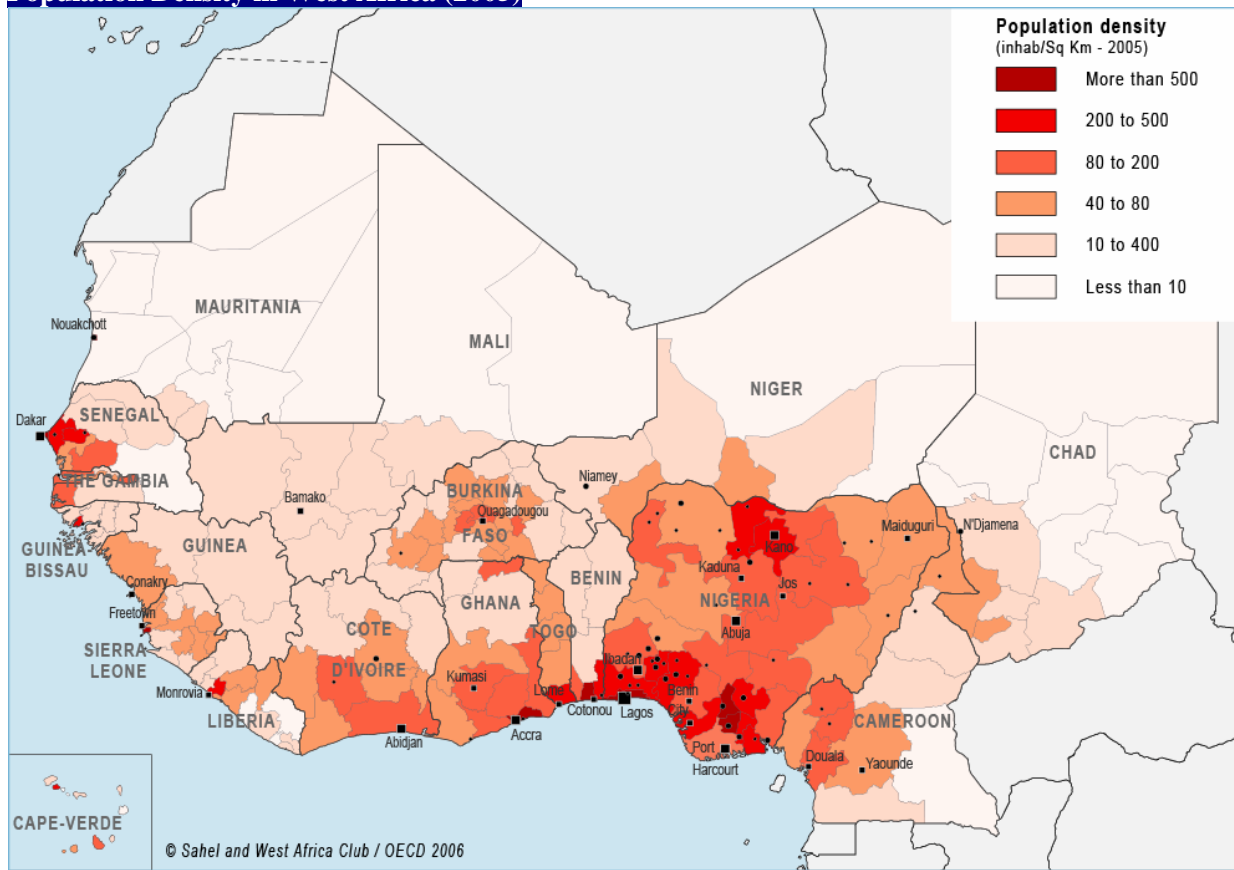
### *How to better anticipate population dynamics?*

Over the last forty years, all ECOWAS countries have experienced strong demographic growth and unprecedented urbanisation. West Africa's population (ECOWAS, Cameroon, Mauritania and Chad) grew from 85 to 290 million between 1960 and 2003 and will have reached almost 430 million by 2020. Over this period, urban population increased nine-fold and today constitutes 45% of the region's total population.

- Where and how will this population live between now and 2020?
- How can West African States and the region as a whole prepare for and support future migration and its destination areas, particularly in terms of territorial development?
- How and on what basis of activities will actors in West Africa live and what will they produce? How can urban production and productivity in what is essentially an informal economy be improved?
- What future is there for an informal economy which has lost its young workers to migration?

These questions are of great concern to ECOWAS which now has political leverage (in the form of the Protocol on free circulation of people and goods and on rights of residence and settlement) which has yet to be fully implemented throughout the region.

## Population Density in West Africa (2005)



## 2.2 Women and youth in West African society

### 2.2.1 The situation and role of women in West Africa

The situation of women in West Africa has significantly changed over the last 30 years. At the international level, the United Nations commitment of 1975 and the Beijing Conference<sup>3</sup> in 1995 marked a turning point in the perception of women's human rights. At the national level, women's rights are recognised and guaranteed by the different Constitutions. West African governments sign and ratify all international conventions against gender discrimination.

In West Africa, the evolution of the situation and role of women is the result of different historical, political and cultural factors. For example, following the great Sahel droughts of the 1970s, when many men were forced to leave, women had to take over the running of their households. Political opening, democratisation and the multiparty system have also opened up possibilities for women to participate in socio-political changes in their countries. Progress on regional integration made by ECOWAS and the WAEMU in terms of the free movement of persons, goods, capital and services has allowed women to become key players in regional and cross-border trade. Access to land ownership and the possibility of obtaining loans – though progress is quite varied throughout the region – are further indicators of these changes.

<sup>3</sup> The Fourth UN World Conference on Women (the 'Beijing Conference'), held in Beijing, China, from 4 to 15 September 1995, was the largest and most influential world conference on women ever organized. Almost 180 governmental delegations and 2,500 NGOs met there to discuss a wide range of questions concerning women. This conference led to the creation of an action plan against gender discrimination.

Despite undeniable progress, many challenges must be met if greater equity and equality are to be achieved. Consequently, young, underprivileged girls, who are mostly under-educated and subject to all kinds of exploitation, come up against difficulties of economic and social integration. In some countries, women still have only limited access to the resources that would allow them to make a greater contribution to production and economic development. But the vital role women play in economic production is in stark contrast to the discrimination and/or lack of opportunities they suffer in terms of access to education, employment, financial options, basic resources and the technologies necessary to successfully engage in production and trade activities.

Schooling, literacy and training for young girls and women are all vital in providing them with the means to gain better access to the rights they hold as citizens and economic actors.

Other challenges exist, including the role of women in preventing conflicts, restoring peace and managing post-conflict situations. They have only started to carve out a place for themselves in terms of governance, by attaining decision-making positions and taking part in the definition of local, national and regional policies and strategies. With greater political voice, they will be in a position to apply pressure to ensure that the legal instruments and mechanisms to protect and support women at the regional and international levels are being implemented.

## Strategic Questions

### *The increasingly prominent role of women in West Africa*

Women play an increasingly significant role in social and economic life and in professional associations. West Africa's women, as mothers, protectors of their families, actors in the informal and formal private sector, main drivers of microfinance projects, agricultural producers and members of civil society, are fundamental to the dynamics of development. However, women still tend to be in the background within the political arena. Moreover, they may often be constrained by social and religious customs and find their basic human rights are threatened.

- How can the implementation of legislation be assured (at local, international, regional and local levels) to offer women basic social protection in West African society?
- What impact does migration, particularly of young people, have on women and families? How do women respond to these new challenges? What social initiatives might help them face these new challenges?

### *2.2.2 The situation of youth in West African society*

As previously underlined, the West African population is very young: almost 45% of the population is under 15 years of age and only 3% of the West African population was born at the time of independence. The fact that the population is so young is a key element in better understanding West African society and emerging challenges. In the long term, progress made cannot be denied: in terms of education, the illiteracy rate fell from 81% in 1970 to 44% in 2001. Infant mortality has fallen by a third over the last 40 years.

However, young people are still facing an alarming situation. In terms of health, they are confronted with the AIDS pandemic, teenage premarital pregnancy, abortion, drug abuse and smoking, etc. Their socio-professional situation is characterised by unemployment, a feeling of neglect, a lack of qualifications or indeed over-qualification faced with a shortage of jobs in the modern sector.

In conflict zones, the alternatives are limited to ‘unemployment’ or military indoctrination. As for children, some are left to fend for themselves with no form of protection, no education (street or ‘talibé’ children) and terrible living conditions with no opportunities or prospects for the future. At the political level, young people are not encouraged to get involved; they have to overcome a number of barriers if they want to achieve greater responsibilities.

Finally, young people cannot find their place in the society they are offered. Although migration is not a new phenomenon, it is being seen from a different angle. The media is revealing the fierce determination of young people, racked by despair and distress, to look elsewhere for a way to escape poverty. This ‘new dimension’ of migration is a highly sensitive subject in both the North and the South. Here, the issue of employment for young people is crucial.

Having a job means acquiring status, economic power and, more broadly speaking, recognition from the rest of society. Over the last 20 years, this challenge has intensified as a result of the deceleration in the rate of economic growth and the increasingly limited ability of the modern sector to meet the growing demand for paid employment. It is now essential to include the key issues of youth employment in poverty reduction and economic development processes, especially as regards reintegration or post-conflict reconstruction initiatives or programmes for refugees, repatriated settlers and internal displaced persons.

Another key challenge is providing quality education and setting up vocational training adapted to suit the socio-economic context and needs of companies. What can be done to encourage the development of economic potentialities that would allow young people to be included in society?

## Strategic Questions

### *What is the future for West Africa’s youth?*

In just a few decades, West Africa’s population, like that of Sub-Saharan Africa, has become one of the youngest in the world: 55% of the region’s population is under 20 years of age. However, the aspirations of these young people are not being fully acknowledged. There has been progress in terms of education, but this is insufficient and can result in undesirable consequences: prostitution, child trafficking, piracy, forced exile, etc. Moreover, this increasingly youthful population is making social and civil demands which society must heed:

- Which social initiatives could bring West African youth together and what hopes do they have of a better future?
- How can young people be engaged more actively and effectively in building democracy?
- What lessons can be learned from informal entrepreneurship among young people at a time of employment crisis?

## **2.3 The socio-political situation in West Africa**

### *2.3.1 Conflicts and socio-political crises in West Africa*

From the time of independence until 2004, West African States have undergone 44 successful military coups, 43 failed coups and 82 acknowledged plots, attributed to elements of the army. West Africa has also suffered seven devastating civil wars.

The nature and number of conflicts have noticeably changed over this period. On the one hand, since the end of the Cold War, inter-State conflicts have disappeared from the West African region. On the other, violent internal struggles, resulting from identity crises, have unfortunately taken centre stage, threatening the implosion of certain States. Ten years after ECOWAS was created (1975), two extremely violent conflicts broke out in Liberia and Sierra Leone. They marked a new dimension to conflicts with their regional nature, the fact that they were financed by illegally exploiting resources in order to purchase equipment (especially small arms) and by the increasing involvement of private armies or mercenaries.

Overall, a reduction in large-scale conflicts is being observed, which is in turn having a relative calming effect on the region: Sierra Leone and Liberia are currently in post-conflict situations and undergoing construction and peace maintenance processes. However, there are still causes for concern that threaten sub-regional fragility and stability: social or armed movements, kidnappings and assassinations, unconstitutional means of accessing power, etc.

### *2.3.2 The end of single parties is insufficient proof of stability*

In West Africa and elsewhere in Africa, the 1990s brought with them the end of the overriding predominance of single party regimes. Democratic choice was established almost everywhere as the legitimate path to power. Consequently, Liberia and Sierra Leone organised free and transparent elections which – for the first time in African history – elected a woman Head of State, Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of Liberia.

These efforts are, however, essential but insufficient. West Africa is still experiencing unconstitutional changes of government that may constitute threats to peace and stability of the sub-region. Furthermore, despite pluralistic elections and the acceptance of the principle of the democratic alternation of power, there are still many obstacles to the rule of law: the low level of public participation in the political process; the weakness of the opposition forces, including the media; the difficulty in establishing a constructive and sustained dialogue with civil society; and the poor level of civic and citizenship education. These weaknesses undermine the credibility of the electoral system and may affect the legitimacy of the authorities in power, even those elected democratically. Continued effort must be made to improve and extend participation in the political process in order to avoid real threats.

*“When leaders are not accountable enough, when regimes are not transparent, when no satisfactory system exists to control power, when the law is not respected, when there is no peaceful way to replace those in power and when human rights are abused, political control takes on a disproportionate dimension and a number of issues become crucially important.”* (Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, 1998)

### *2.3.3 Progress and challenges for governance*

In most of the countries of the sub-region, good governance is being given increasing importance in the development process through participation, transparency, responsibility, decentralisation, efficiency and the primacy of the rule of law and compliance with the law. This situation nevertheless remains fragile in view of the different sources of tension and the social crises observed in West Africa.



Efforts must be continued to keep the situation on a positive course. It was in this context that the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a product of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), was adopted by the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee on 9 March 2003. This mechanism represents an opportunity for Africa to consolidate and reinforce good governance, in other words to "*foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration*". Since the APRM initiative was launched, 26 African countries have voluntarily adhered to the mechanism.

#### *2.3.4 Challenges for human security in West Africa*

At the political level, all the countries declare themselves to be democratic. Most of them have ministers for human rights and have signed the international human rights conventions. Once considered a haven of peace and security, West Africa has come to be seen in recent years as an area of insecurity and a place where human rights are not respected. The situation in West Africa clearly illustrates the difficulties arising in other African sub-regions in terms of respect for all human rights implied in the concept of human security. The failure of the security system in most West African States and the succession of political crises have been contributing to a growing sense of insecurity among West African populations over the last 10 years.

The insecurity within West African States has many shapes and dimensions. It is both individual and collective, affecting all the millions of West Africans. It is not held back by State borders and has a cross-border dimension, with the proliferation and illegal dealing of arms, trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking and the plundering of natural resources. It also has serious social implications, especially in terms of health, where it exposes people to a higher risk of infection and transmission of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, it is linked to natural disasters, especially extreme weather conditions.

Faced with these threats, States, regional organisations and civil society have taken a number of initiatives. The West African States are party to the main international and regional human rights instruments. However, the observance of human rights is often hindered by different obstacles: poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness, corruption, indifference and sometimes unwillingness. Failure to respect legal provisions and the inadequacy of certain national legislations mean a good deal of work is still needed in order to ensure that impunity, unawareness and ignorance of rights do not lead to frustration.

## Strategic Questions

### *Peace and security*

- How can peace and security be promoted? What regional political tools can West Africa set up to strengthen peace and security?
- How can the dynamics of crisis and conflict be managed in a way which improves human security in West Africa? What complementary roles can individual States and the region play in promoting peace and security?
- What complementary roles should political parties, civil society and the media play in building peace and democracy in West Africa?

### *Democracy and governance*

- What is the future of democracy in West Africa? Does multi-party politics respond to the demand for democracy? Is there a future for other systems of governance?
- Does the Nation State constitute a relevant entity as regards West African solidarity?
- How can women play a more visible role in politics?
- How can women's experiences in helping to build peace and democracy be recognised politically?
- What are the lessons learned from women's commitment to the political process as regards good governance?

## **2.4 Regional economic development: some options and strategies**

West Africa is not a homogeneous region: it is made up of different countries and is based on various cultural, economic and socio-political aspects. But in spite of this diversity, the region faces a series of shared challenges. These economic, political and environmental challenges require strong national and regional institutions and the establishment of a credible partnership with other representatives of society and development partners.

### *2.4.1 Economic growth, development and diversification*

Over the last five years, significant progress in terms of economic growth has been observed in most West African countries. Average growth exceeded 5% per year. This economic climate is the result of the combination of several factors, including the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies, improved terms of trade, widespread involvement by the international community (G8, the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, the role of emerging countries – India, Brazil, China, etc.), and the evolution of the real estate market.

At the macroeconomic level, other indicators highlight certain limits to this growth. The region has experienced high inflation, particularly as a result of the rise in market prices for cereals and oil. The state of public finances in most of the countries of the region remains unstable. In the long term, regional growth has been highly irregular: from 3.5% in 2001, it fell to 1.6% in 2002 and then accelerated to reach 7.1% in 2003, followed by 3.4% in 2004 and 5.8% in 2005.

Finally, production growth has not been as rapid as population growth. This imbalance has led to a decline in the standard of living of the population, a decrease in the production of goods and services and recurrent food shortages, etc. On this basis, it is clear that if West Africa hopes to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (a minimum of 7% growth per year is required), greater efforts must be made to:

- Pursue efficient macroeconomic management and suitable sectoral policies;
- Encourage open integration: promoting regional trade while opening the region to world trade;
- Continue investing in human capital (education and health);
- Continue improvements in the business climate;
- Develop quality infrastructure, etc.

Furthermore, the growth of West African economies is still largely dependent upon the export revenues from unprocessed or partially processed agricultural and mining products. These are subject external shocks such as weather hazards and changes in international market prices.

This situation of dependence argues for economic diversification based on an industrialisation capable of generating more jobs. Diversification of this kind could be envisaged by first taking account of industrial farming input requirements (equipment and machinery, fertilisers and other chemical products, for example). Moreover, agro-industrial processing for food and agricultural products could be stepped up to meet the growing demands of urban consumers.

The diversification of the regional economy could also involve the development of industrial activity in the broad sense of the term. But a number of obstacles still impede the development of this activity: high production costs (the extra costs of energy<sup>4</sup>, telecommunications, etc.), market opening and competition from imported goods, especially those of Asian origin. This implies developing a coherent industrial development strategy allowing companies to be competitive at the national, regional and international levels. This strategy must be based on:

- The creation of a favourable investment framework;
- The development of production capacities to guarantee more competitive companies;
- The implementation of African standards;
- The development of South/South and North/South trade;
- The promotion of an effective regional integration policy, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the kilowatt/hour in Burkina Faso and Mali costs two to three times more than in coastal countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire.

### *2.4.2 The regional integration process*

In terms of regional integration, West Africa has made significant progress in comparison with the rest of the continent. Historically, different organisations have played a pioneering role, and some continue to play a role in the integration process: the Senegal River Development Organisation (OMVS), the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Liptako N’Gourma, the Conseil de l’Entente, etc. To a certain extent, the results recorded today by the WAEMU and ECOWAS are encouraging. West Africa has already achieved regional integration to a large extent in terms of currency (French-speaking countries), the movement of persons, the right of establishment for certain people in the countries of the Union (doctors, architects, accountants, etc.) and in terms of transport infrastructure, especially roads.

Many hurdles still exist, however, as is the case in the intra-regional trade sector. The numerous roadblocks and control points on main roads of the region generate heavy costs for operators. Economic operators are demanding greater integration, which could constitute a response to competition from Asian countries. With regard to education, each country is developing a national system, with varying degrees of difficulty. Although certain regional structures already exist, it has been suggested that poles of excellence should be created and promoted at the West African level and beyond.

If West Africa is to achieve better integration into the globalisation process, then regional integration must be concrete and the States of the region must be stronger. The structure of its production, the level of human capital training, the availability of basic infrastructure and the high production costs are all challenges that Africa must meet.

At the institutional level, efforts are being made with a view to strengthening the regional integration process. The restructuring of ECOWAS into a Commission, adopted in January 2006 in Niamey, will be effective as of January 2007. It will be headed by a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and seven commissioners in charge of sectoral issues. This regional institutional restructuring is accompanied by a move to align and associate different institutions. The WAEMU countries, for example, have agreed with ECOWAS to improve the competitiveness of economies through a customs union and the implementation of sectoral policies. Thus, the Regional Economic Programme (REP) set up with ECOWAS aims to increase growth and reduce the costs of factors of production. The CILSS should also implement certain sub-programmes for action under the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy, the regional seed catalogue or the planning blueprint for the WAEMU area.

These efforts are crucial and should continue to promote a coherent regional policy, especially in the context of food security.

## Strategic Questions

### *How to strengthen the region-building process?*

Region-building is the product of regionalism, regionalisation and regional cooperation. When ECOWAS was created in 1975, its aim was to promote the circulation of goods and people within the region. Thirty years later, the obstacles to trade and circulation of goods and people still exist, principally due to individual States' lack of will to implement the agreements that they have signed.

- How can the region-building process be strengthened? What complementary role can local (public and private), national and regional institutions play in region-building?
- How can the region's public assets be valorised? What roles should the State - at national and local government level - and the private sector play?
- Does ECOWAS have room to manoeuvre in implementing its mandates?
- How can the obstacles preventing ECOWAS from completely assuming its mandate be removed?
- What means are available to ECOWAS in forcing countries to respect agreements (e.g., the Protocols)?

### *What is the future for ECOWAS?*

Since its creation, ECOWAS has consisted of a number of institutions, each with limited resources. ECOWAS could risk attaching too much significance to issues of security and peace to the detriment of economic integration issues. Another risk could be that as ECOWAS is very often solicited for support in so many areas, it may not be able to respond effectively to the priorities.

- How and to what extent can ECOWAS play a supranational role? Does ECOWAS really have authority to force States to respect its protocols?
- What human and financial resources does ECOWAS have at its disposal? What additional resources should it have in the future in order to carry out its mandate?
- Upon what basis should ECOWAS prioritise its activities?
- What institutional changes would be most likely to bring about the integration demanded by various actors, and their desire to be better informed? How can citizens be more involved with their regional institutions?

### *How to build regional citizenship?*

West Africa's population still has little knowledge of ECOWAS. The media and educational institutions are still not sufficiently involved in civic education initiatives regarding regional integration. Regional citizenship also depends on the establishment of a West African identity, principally through the promotion of West African languages.

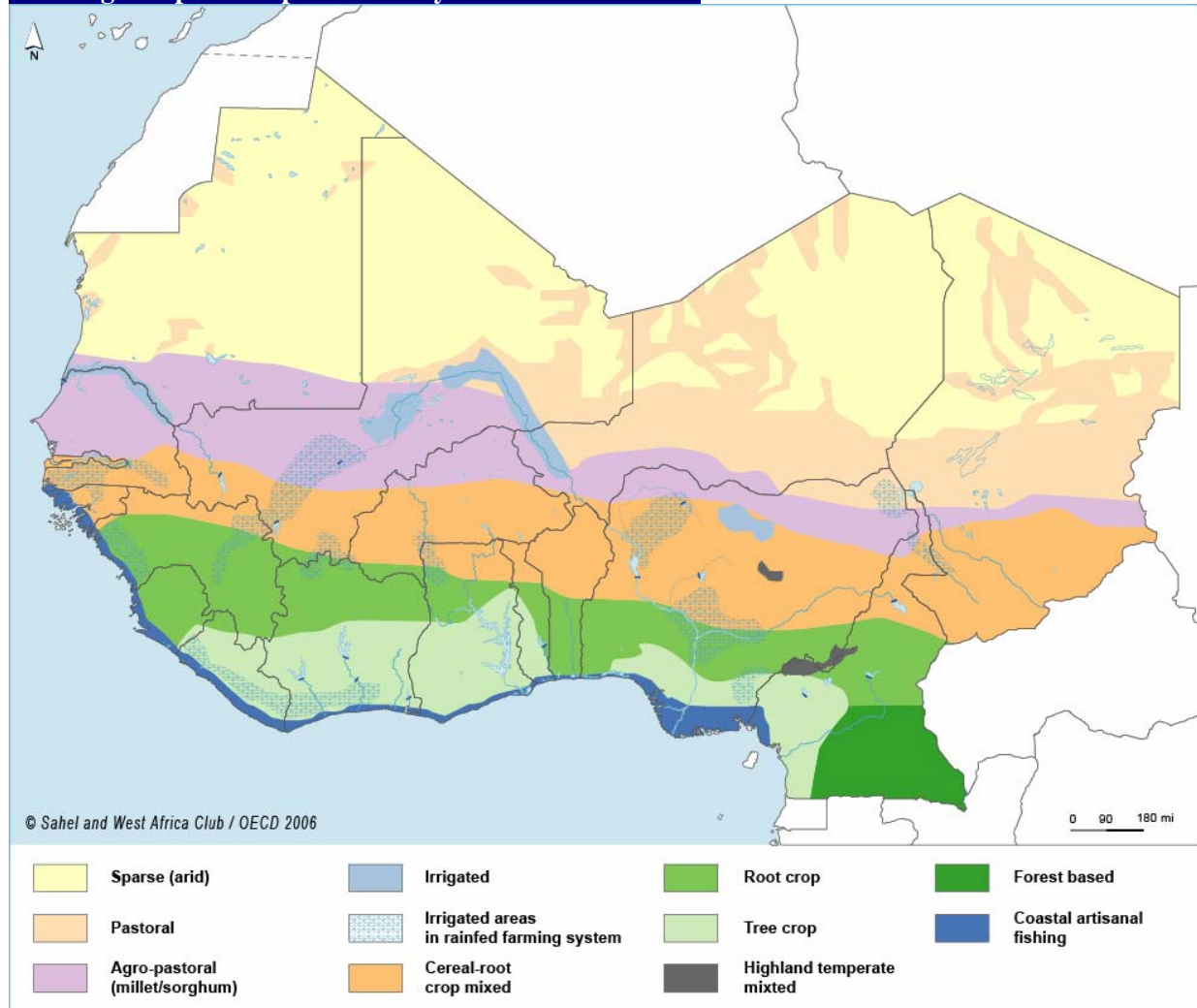
- How can a common identity for West Africa be created? Should the issue of regional integration be promoted within the education system?
- How can the dissemination of local languages be encouraged, particularly through the education system?
- What is the impact upon families of the change from a rural to a more urban culture; from a consensus-based culture traditionally rooted in society to an alternative culture? What is the place of women in this alternative culture?

### 2.4.3 Agriculture and food security

West Africa has considerable ecological and agronomical potential. With regard to the agro-pastoral sector, despite the natural complementarity between the different ecological areas (cattle rearing and dry cereals in the north; tubers and water-intensive cereals in the south), arable land is largely underused today. Of over 70 million hectares of arable land, only 14% are fully exploited today and of over 130 million hectares of pastoral land, only 26% are used. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, the different river basins have significant potential for irrigation: at least 500,000 ha for the small basins. In the Gulf of Guinea, the potential of certain basins exceeds 6,000,000 ha. But only 4% of land is irrigated.

In terms of food security, certain indicators are positive and seem to highlight an improvement in the situation over the last 30 years. For example, for CILSS member countries, imports and food aid are relatively insignificant in comparison with availabilities and requirements for dry cereals. Furthermore, since the mid-1980s, food aid in the Sahel region has been decreasing.

**Farming and pastoral production systems in West Africa**



Despite this progress, food security problems persist. Given the pluvial nature of a large part of the agro-pastoral system, the climate is, and remains, a decisive factor in the state and evolution of the food situation. Food security challenges are therefore structural and mean the region must make strategic choices in order to adapt to climate variations, which appear to be more pronounced and more frequent in the short and medium terms, and to climate change, which is inevitable in the long term.

However, these uncertain environmental conditions are not enough to explain the recurrent nature of food crises. These are also partly caused by the liberalisation of foreign trade in West African countries and the consequent disorganisation of agro-pastoral markets and production chains<sup>5</sup>. To what extent can broadening the WAEMU Common External Tariff (CET) to include ECOWAS address the issue of the protection of the West African agro-pastoral sector? What strategies are possible?

## Strategic Questions

### *Can the creation of a regional agricultural market address food security issues?*

Producers' organisations predict that in the next fifteen years, West Africa will have to import more food commodities in order to feed the 400 million (and more) people living in the region. They are concerned that the region will become too dependent on overseas imports, and that this is a threat to the region's food sovereignty. In order to meet the challenge of food security they are encouraging regional authorities to agree to draft a common agricultural policy (CAP) which would protect West African farmers and promote food security by creating a regional agricultural market.

- How can sustainable management of natural resources be improved in order to preserve these resources for future generations?
- How can politicians be encouraged to oversee development which is sustainable and sufficiently robust to withstand the forces of competition in the region? What roles do public and private actors and civil society play in this domain?
- What is the future for family farming given the opening up of markets and increased competition at regional and international levels?
- How can family farms be transformed sustainably in the context of growing demand for agricultural products?
- How will national policies implement the CAP in the context of competition within the region?
- How can we ensure equal access to agricultural biotechnology in the future?

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<sup>5</sup> Customs duties on basic food products in the WAEMU are low (5% for rice compared to over 95% for the CCT in European Union member countries).

The answers to these questions depend on the political and economic choices that governments, civil society representatives and development partners will make together as part of a collective responsibility approach.

Today this political response comes up against the inadequacy of statistical information systems. Without reliable information, it is difficult to make projections and therefore to promote relevant development strategies that are adapted to suit the challenges of society.

Looking back, the aid programmes set up over the last 30 years have had scant results. At the strategic level, several reasons may explain these limitations: (i) the inconsistency between declarations made by partners and the real amounts, the regularity and the modalities of aid; (ii) the lack of coherence between development partners' initiatives; and (iii) the discrepancy between partners' strategies and the priorities announced by the countries concerned.

At the philosophical level, it seems important to re-examine the concepts of development. It is consequently essential to take account of socio-cultural contexts in the definition and implementation of development cooperation policies. Development actors must also be empowered, especially women and youth, and encouraged to participate in development strategies and processes. More broadly speaking, the development of Africa must be based on the traditions and cultural experiences of populations, since, as Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo said, "We do not develop something, we develop ourselves", just as "We do not develop ourselves using the culture of others".



## Strategic Questions

### *How can the region better prepare for its role in the international context?*

West Africa is changing, but so is the rest of the world. Developing countries are becoming increasingly prominent in the international arena. This applies to some Asian countries (China, India, etc.) and South American countries (Brazil). These countries have played and will continue to play a particular and increasingly significant role in West Africa's future as economic partners.

- How can national production be developed in order to be competitive within the region and internationally, particularly given the new and impending commercial agreements (EU-ACP, AGOA, etc.)?
- What opportunities and challenges does the new geo-strategic orientation of Asian countries present for West Africa?
- What lessons can West Africa learn from the experiences of developing countries and particularly from South-South cooperation?
- How can West Africa adopt new technologies (cable, new information and communication technologies) and adapt them to its own circumstances in order to keep pace with the region's need to develop?
- How can the region be integrated into the "knowledge economy" currently driven and dominated by Western and Asian cultures?

### *How can indigenous resources be mobilised in order to sustain the region's development over the medium and long-term?*

The limitations of traditional development aid mechanisms have been amply demonstrated. Moreover, the lack of effective and reliable financial infrastructures in the region is a major obstacle to the development of a regional economic area. Neither African investors nor the African diaspora will invest in the region without the support of a sound banking system (particularly in Nigeria). The informal sector continues to develop, and investment encouraged by favourable international economic conditions is increasing in certain sectors, notably oil.

- How can savings and investment be encouraged in the region?
- What are the ways and means of encouraging better distribution of oil revenues to further development?
- How can actors' image and perception of West Africa be changed in order to attract inward investment into the financial, human and technological sectors?
- How can microfinance institutions be assured of a more secure future? How can relations between these institutions and the banking system be strengthened at the regional level? How can microfinance services be made more widely available?
- What is the relationship between the formal private sector and the informal economy?
- In what ways can the private and public sectors and investors contribute to improvements in the business environment?

### III. PERSPECTIVES FOR THE REGION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB

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#### 3.1 Perspectives

##### A. Remarks

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will prove difficult to achieve by 2015, and in order to do so, West Africa would need a constant growth rate of 7% per year, which will not be the case. Certain panellists believe today that these objectives must be extended to 2020-2025 rather than 2015, providing that West Africa diversifies its products for growth, which is currently based on real estate speculation and oil. With regard to the socio-economic situation, it is not expected to make any significant improvement. There is a high risk that poverty will increase, as will the gap between rich and poor.
- *The reliability of statistics and information* remains a serious challenge: one of the weak points of the economic governance tools available to African countries is the inadequacy of information systems. Yet without reliable data, it is impossible to carry out prospective studies and difficult to develop suitable strategies. Structural adjustment programmes and the priority given to restoring macroeconomic balances have seriously reduced the capacity of African governments to carry out prospective analysis and to make plans, with the ministries in charge of this work even being eliminated in some cases. Today it is becoming urgent to restore these capacities if Africa is to develop the human, financial and technical resources needed to implement the NEPAD and to pursue the Millennium Development Goals.
- Regional integration seems to be an opportunity to meet the many challenges shared by all countries, while taking account of the complementarity between the local, national and regional levels. The reform undertaken by ECOWAS, which will take effect as of January 2007, ties in with this approach.
- One of the most important issues for the future of the region, which ECOWAS must address rapidly, is that of youth. As expressed by the West African Youth Coordination Group, young people represent an extraordinary potential for the region, providing they are listened to, taken in hand and given hope for the future. Failing this, this potential could easily be turned into a destabilising force in the region. ECOWAS is fully aware of this danger. It therefore plans to begin by providing young people with a voluntary regional service coordinated by ECOWAS.

##### B. Recommendations

#### West Africa and its human capital

- The importance of associating women with conflict management has already been stressed. For the time being, women are limited to mediation initiatives, and are rarely invited to negotiating tables.
- In the same sense, in post-conflict situations, the fate of women and children is not sufficiently taken into consideration. Women are very often excluded from DDR programmes, despite the fact that they tend to be the principal victims of conflicts.

- Young people do not just want to be taken into account, but also to take part in finding solutions. They suggest that regional and international organisations should invest more in education, training and citizenship. They also request that the issues of youth employment and gender be given greater importance in poverty reduction policies.
- The panellists all agree that one of the greatest resources available to West Africa is its human capital. They therefore encourage the States and ECOWAS to continue to invest massively in this capital.

### Regional integration

- The participants expressed the hope that the reform of ECOWAS will allow it to become more operational and efficient and will accelerate the integration process in the region;
- They believe that regional integration could become a reality, providing quality infrastructure is developed, which would foster regional trade;
- They encourage the development of regional educational networks in order to optimise the expenditure needed to improve education, especially at the university level;
- They suggest developing regional training on regional integration, which would foster the emergence of a regional citizenship.

### West Africa and the rest of the world

- In order to ensure better integration into globalisation, they suggest that the countries of the region and ECOWAS should seize opportunities linked to international agreements, such as the AGOA (with the United States) or the EPAs (with Europe).
- It was suggested that the cultural dimension of development should be given greater importance. As one participant stressed, by giving culture a new central role in development, this also gives Africa a new central role in the international community. Development based on the traditions and cultural experiences of populations, drawing its strength from their will to drive the economic, social and cultural change they aspire to, will allow Africa to move into modernity and into a more humane form of globalisation.

### **3.2 Partnership with the Sahel and West Africa Club**

For several years, the Sahel and West Africa Club has been developing partnerships with a certain number of regional and international organisations, most of which were present at this meeting. In their speeches, the representatives of these organisations all stressed the importance of their partnership with the SWAC, which they plan to strengthen in the future. It is within this context in 2006 that formal cooperation agreements with the CILSS and ECOWAS have been finalised; they should be signed before the end of the year. Other partnership agreements are currently being negotiated.

The aim of these agreements is not to increase the number of joint initiatives but to have the Club's partners work more closely together as well as with the SWAC, and to integrate these joint initiatives into their respective work plans.

This is the case of the ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP), which was implemented in cooperation with the SWAC, notably through organising workshops on the ground addressing cross-border cooperation initiatives in such diverse fields as community radio stations, health services and farming and cattle rearing services, etc.

### ***3.3 Specific proposals***

At the close of discussions, the SWAC was broadly encouraged by its partners to continue its initiatives and projects.

- They stressed the importance of the women's network on conflict and governance which the SWAC set up in an informal manner and the systematic acknowledgement of gender as an issue in its work and initiatives.
- The Youth Coordination Group asked the Club to support them in an initiative aimed at encouraging regional organisations to set up policies for young people at the regional level.
- The participants encouraged the SWAC to support regional initiatives in the field of knowledge, know-how and education.
- Certain participants believe that the Club is in a position to organise a high-level meeting on the challenges for the region, which would tie in with the implementation of the Paris Agenda on policy harmonisation.
- In terms of cross-border cooperation, they suggested that the SWAC address the issue of human trafficking at the cross-border level.
- Noting that the lack of data and reliable information constituted an obstacle to carrying out prospective studies at the regional level, they requested opening a dialogue with the OECD on this matter. Moreover, they encouraged the SWAC to continue its prospective studies on West Africa at the same time.

## IV. CONCLUSION

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- Mr. Goerens and Mr. Lauzon thanked the representatives for having participated in this second meeting of the SPG in Africa. This was the opportunity for some of them to take stock of the situation in Africa *in situ* and for the Club to meet representatives of SPG member countries posted in the region.
- This meeting encouraged a substantial exchange of views on subjects of interest to the region and the development partners far from budgetary or administrative considerations.
- A thematic meeting of this kind will take place again in spring 2007 in West Africa, as requested by the members of the SPG during the meeting in November 2004. The modalities will be defined during the next meeting in Berlin in January 2007.
- All of the speeches are available in the Volume 2.

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