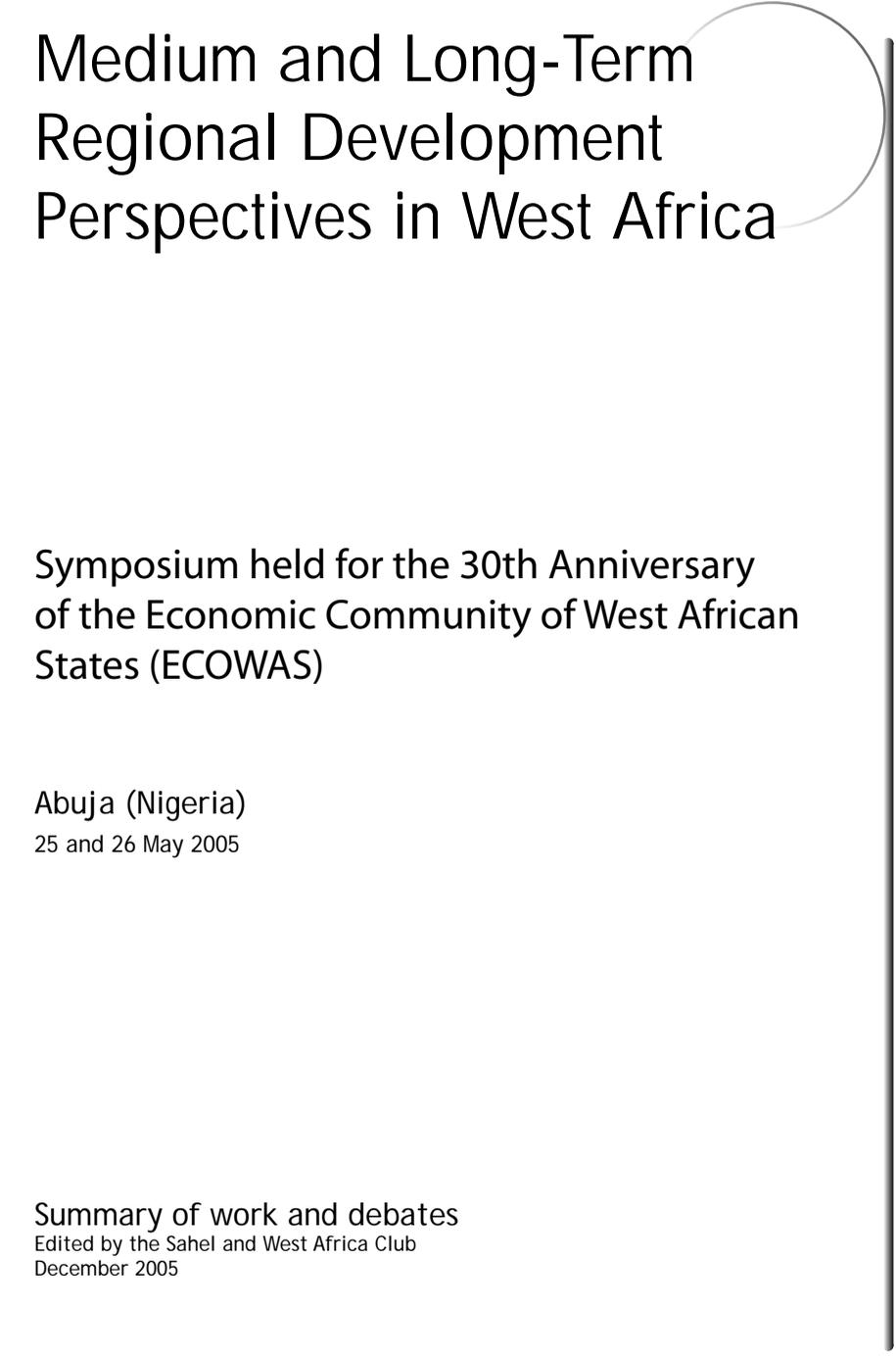




Symposium  
held for the  
30th Anniversary  
of ECOWAS

Medium and Long-Term  
Regional Development  
Perspectives  
in West Africa

# Medium and Long-Term Regional Development Perspectives in West Africa



Symposium held for the 30th Anniversary  
of the Economic Community of West African  
States (ECOWAS)

Abuja (Nigeria)

25 and 26 May 2005

Summary of work and debates

Edited by the Sahel and West Africa Club

December 2005

## **The Sahel and West Africa Club**

The Club du Sahel was created in 1976 by Member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in collaboration with African leaders from Sahelian countries as a forum for the International Community to discuss and encourage strong support over the long-term for countries in the Sahelian region, victims of the drought.

In 2001, taking into account the interdependence and complementarity of the Sahel with other countries of West Africa, the Sahel Club's Strategy and Policy Group decided to expand its geographic coverage. The Club then became the Sahel and West Africa Club.

As a facilitator, moderator and leader of open constructive exchanges, the Club plays a bridging role, an interface between West African actors and OECD Member countries. Its main objectives are to:

- Help identify strategic questions related to medium- and long-term development in West Africa;
- Facilitate exchanges between regional actors and OECD Member countries;
- Promote constructive debates that lead to innovative decisions within and outside the region aimed at building a better future for the region.

The Club works within a network consisting of West African government representatives, actors from civil society, the private sector as well as development and research agencies. The Club also works in close collaboration with West African development partners and with international and regional organisations notably ROPPA, the CILSS, the WAEMU, and ECOWAS, its principal partner in the region.

As a member of the OECD's Development Cluster, the Club has also developed synergies with other Directorates.

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# List of abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AEC	African Economic Community
AFRACA	African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association
AGOA	Africa Growth and Opportunity Act
AU	African Union
CARI	Comprehensive Atlas of Regional Integration
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (Comité permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOLOC	«Revival of the Local Economies» Programme (SWAC Secretariat)
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAP	ECOWAS' Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MJPI	Mouvement des jeunes pour la paix et l'intégration
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NICT	New Information and Communication Technologies
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMVS	Organisme de mise en valeur du Fleuve Sénégal
PRSF	Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
REC	Regional Economic Community
ROPPA	West African Network of Farmers' organisations and agricultural producers (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest)
SPG	Strategy and Policy Group (SWAC)
SWAC	Sahel and West Africa Club (OECD)
UN	United Nations
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WAHO	West African Health Organisation
WALTPS	West Africa Long-Term Perspective Study
WAMI	West African Monetary Institute/ECOWAS
WTO	World Trade Organisation



# Foreword

Within the framework of their partnership and to celebrate ECOWAS' 30th anniversary, the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC Secretariat)<sup>1</sup> organised a discussion panel in Abuja, on 25 and 26 May 2005, to discuss the issue of regional development perspectives in West Africa, regional integration and the evolution of ECOWAS' role. ECOWAS and the SWAC Secretariat acted as facilitators, coordinators and federators as part of an ongoing consultation and appropriation process by Africans themselves. ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, chaired the opening session which was also attended by the President of ECOWAS Parliament, Mr. Ali Nouhoum Diallo.

*1. Information on the role and organisation of ECOWAS and the SWAC is available on the following websites: [www.ecowas.int](http://www.ecowas.int); and [www.oecd.org/sah](http://www.oecd.org/sah).*

The following work was accomplished and examined by the Panel in preparation for the Symposium:

- SWAC Secretariat prepared a working document on the review of around 150 retrospective and prospective studies of interest to West Africa. The aim was to draw up an inventory of transformation processes, challenges, risks, major trends and strategic visions identified in these studies that might clarify the exchanges on the future of the region.
- On the basis of this work, the SWAC Secretariat prepared a summary document on its perception of the region, regional integration and ECOWAS' role which is presented in the first section of this report.
- Production of a regional Atlas, in partnership with the ECOWAS/SWAC Secretariats, containing a series of intermediate maps on transport and telecommunications in the ECOWAS zone. These maps will be included in the Comprehensive Atlas on Regional Integration (CARI) which will be produced over the next eighteen months. The production of this Comprehensive Atlas seeks to inform discussions on regional development perspectives.

ECOWAS and the SWAC Secretariats invited citizens from the 15 ECOWAS member States plus Mauritania to take part in this Symposium in Abuja. The origins and functions of the participants make them a prestigious assembly, faithfully reflecting the diversity of West African society: men and women;

2. See the list of participants  
on page 75.

young and old; rural/farming and urban communities; private and public sectors; on-the-ground actors and researchers; diplomats; the media<sup>2</sup>.

The major objectives of the Panel were to discuss the initial points of a joint analysis of regional processes in West Africa and to identify the major strategic issues that might act as a basis for in-depth thought on possible and desirable futures for the region and the evolution of ECOWAS' role, as part of the regional integration process.

The aim was not to define scenarios on the evolution of the region and of ECOWAS but rather to contribute to a more extensive discussion and decision-making process allowing open, informal and direct exchanges between members of the Panel on the basis of their knowledge of the region, of ECOWAS and of their experiences in their respective environments. The members of the Panel were therefore asked to discuss and debate:

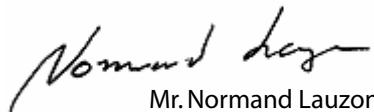
- Their perception of the region and ECOWAS' role ;
- Their medium- and long-term vision of ECOWAS;
- Priority strategic issues that might be discussed in-depth over the next few months and years, relating to desirable and possible futures for the region and the development of the role and positioning of ECOWAS.

To do so, it was agreed that the panel's work should be organised as follows:

- Review of the results of the analytical inventory and of the data contained in the intermediate maps;
- Identification of major trends – transformations, challenges and risks - through discussion and informed debate, which could be taken as priorities for the future;
- Identification of a limited and priority number of themes/issues to be examined in the following phase as well as the organisations most qualified to develop them within a well-understood partnership.



Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas,  
ECOWAS Executive Secretary



Mr. Normand Lauzon,  
Director, SWAC Secretariat

Abuja, Nigeria, 25 May 2005

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# I. Opening Interventions

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## Opening Statement by

### Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS Executive Secretary

(original text in English)

*Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Panel Members,  
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the ECOWAS Institutions and on my own behalf, I wish to welcome you all very warmly to the ECOWAS Headquarters. You are most welcome to this symposium, one of the events to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Community. This provides an excellent opportunity for me to express the profound gratitude of the entire Community to His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the government and people of Nigeria for being such admirable hosts these past thirty years. Proof of this is the confidence that Nigeria has generated in the other Member States, by their decision to host two more Community institutions, the Parliament and the Court of Justice in Nigeria.

*Distinguished Delegates,*

This symposium is special in a number of ways. As an anniversary event, we expect that some of your time would be devoted to recalling and reviewing the past performance of the Community. More than this, you are being invited to view issues within the context of the environment in which the regional integration process has been taking place – the challenges facing the different actors, making the integration process meet the exigencies of the West African development agenda. Above all, you are called upon to think about the future prospects of both the integration and development processes in West Africa, and how ECOWAS would need to evolve to best serve these twin processes.

ECOWAS has agreed, with the co-organisers the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club, that your two-day symposium will be a brain-storming exercise, leading eventually to a set of policy recommendations for adoption by ECOWAS bodies and other relevant stakeholders. This is only to give an

indication of the importance that we in ECOWAS attach to your meeting, which has been described elsewhere as “strategic deliberations”.

During the past thirty years, West Africans have been strengthening regional solidarity and creating a common identity. They have sought to transform and provide a modern expression to traditional values and ties among local communities and among the fifteen countries. ECOWAS has given West Africa a “common citizen” identity, a free trade area, an anthem and a flag, an Authority of Heads of State, a parliament, a court of justice, a regional bank and we are moving steadily towards a common currency. How do we consolidate these achievements and ensure that regional integration becomes a veritable means for unleashing and developing the potentials of the regional economy? How does the integration process contribute effectively to poverty eradication by impacting positively on the life of the ordinary citizen? These are some of the questions that the strategic deliberations of this symposium is expected to address and help us shape a better future for West Africa.

*Mr. Chairman,*

ECOWAS has achieved some measure of success in all areas of its mandate, which include market integration, monetary integration, development of a regional production base, and regional peace and security. The designation of ECOWAS as the NEPAD focal point in West Africa by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Yamoussoukro in May 2002 has enabled the Community to embark on effective implementation of NEPAD programmes and projects in the areas of road transport, telecommunications, energy, monetary and fiscal policies, agriculture and food security, intra-regional trade development and external market access, as well as in the area of political governance with particular focus on enhancing regional peace and security.

Among the seven main regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa's integration landscape, ECOWAS is a clear leader. We should recall that in May 1991 the African Heads of State and Government promulgated the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). The Abuja Treaty provides that the RECs will be the pillars for establishing the economic union in six phases over 34 years. It is my pleasure to inform you that only ECOWAS has been able to move close to the third phase, which requires the establishment of a customs union: a free trade area and then a common external tariff in each REC. ECOWAS' achievements are as a result

of the commitment of the Authority of Heads of State and Government and also through the revision of the 1975 treaty in 1993. In the revised treaty, the vital principles of supranationality in the application of Community decisions and the autonomous funding of the institutions' budgets were introduced.

*Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The evolution of the ECOWAS' mandate to accommodate regional realities, as reflected in the revised treaty, is exemplified by the pioneering role of ECOWAS in promoting regional peace and security. Peace and security are the pillars upon which economic development rests; as without political stability there cannot be meaningful development. As a result of ECOWAS' concern for peace and security in the sub-region, the Authority of Heads of State and Government adopted a Non-Aggression Protocol in 1978, a Defence Assistance Protocol in 1981 and a Declaration of Political Principles in July 1991. This Declaration, which is a plea for democratic principles in the region, condemns unequivocally any seizure of power by force of arms. It must also be pointed out that in 1990 the Authority of Heads of State and Government created an ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group, ECOMOG. This peace-keeping force is needed to intervene credibly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

*Mr. Chairman,*

There are other significant achievements. One may cite the creation of other Community institutions such as the Parliament and Court of Justice, the West African supranational institutions for law enactment and arbitration in the application of the Community's decisions and laws.

The enhancement of the institutional arrangements includes the transformation of the ECOWAS Fund into the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), the merger of OCGGE and West African Health Community (WAHC) into the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) and the transformation of the West African Clearing House (WACH) into the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA). These changes have strengthened the Community as a regional organisation with a supranational identity and a greater capacity for leading the integration process in West Africa. Already, a positive impact of these changes is being felt on the region's development.

The setbacks experienced by ECOWAS, though not unusual to us as a regional economic community, have slowed down our march towards economic development and regional integration. For example, the West African region has failed to make impressive progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Apart from some limited progress in the areas of primary education, gender and infant mortality, the MDGs and the ambitions of NEPAD remain as a whole beyond the reach of the region. In particular, the growth level required to progress vigorously towards the MDGs and the NEPAD is not yet achieved.

A major setback is the series of conflicts within the region for the past fifteen years. I am referring to the political instability experienced in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and more recently, Cote d'Ivoire. The conflicts have had adverse effects on the regional economy which grew at 4.6 percent in 2004, a figure much below the 7 percent minimum growth rate required for the attainment of MDG target of reducing by half the number of poor people by 2015.

The non-ratification and implementation of ECOWAS decisions and protocols have constituted a stumbling block to the regional integration agenda. The non-implementation issue is reflected in the non-incorporation of ECOWAS programmes into national economic agendas of most Member States. Besides, other specific obstacles militating against economic development and integration of the region include insufficient political and policy commitment, continued reliance on primary commodity exports, non-complementary production structures, weak infrastructure and institutions, small and fragmented markets, civil and external disturbances, language barriers, multiplicity of currencies and overlapping memberships of inter-governmental organizations (IGOs).

As I mentioned in my 2004 Annual Report presented to the ECOWAS Authority in Accra in January 2005, "... it is necessary that we spend much of the period of celebration in deep introspection – to assess the regional integration difficulties that we have encountered, to examine the current approaches and strategies that we have adopted to meet the development challenges, to devise more realistic and effective ways of tackling our common problems, and to make a much stronger commitment to the faithful pursuit of our integration and development goals."

I believe strongly that the regional integration agenda has a lot of prospects. Thus, I request you all to participate effectively over these two days in critical review and deliberations. As I indicated earlier, we are expecting this symposium to help us prepare for the future. Together, we can make West Africa a region where fundamental human rights are not only enshrined in our constitutions but are seen to be protected and promoted by all; where the average citizen can live in dignity; have access to education and work; where the Community citizen can travel easily, cheaply and safely by road, rail, air or sea without hindrance; where the adult citizen can enjoy at least two meals a day, and children three meals; where basic livelihood, quality education and good health are assured; and where our people can interact freely anywhere in the world, with dignity. That is my vision for ECOWAS.

*Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The challenge now is to address the constraints preventing West Africa from achieving this vision. A major challenge is to maintain a politically stable environment, good governance and regional peace, as well as strong political commitment to the integration process. Our Member States should continue to surrender some level of national sovereignty to our strong and independent supranational institutions, which will on their behalf take up the major political, economic and social challenges not addressed individually.

*Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*On this note, I wish all of you very fruitful participation.*

*I thank you for your kind attention.*



## Opening Statement by

### Mr. Normand Lauzon, Director, Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat

(original text in French)

*Mr. Executive Secretary of ECOWAS,  
Madam, the Director of Communications for ECOWAS,  
Madam, the President of the Sahel and West Africa Club,  
Ladies and gentlemen, Members of the Strategic Thinking Panels,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,*

I am very pleased to be among you at this very important meeting on West African Regional Development Perspectives, Regional Integration and the Evolution of ECOWAS' role, an event co-organised by ECOWAS and the Sahel and West Africa Club for the celebration of ECOWAS' 30th anniversary.

Allow me to welcome you and thank you, very sincerely, for having favourably responded to our invitation to participate in the work undertaken by the strategic thinking panel on subjects of great importance for West Africa.

Today, I would like to raise the three following questions:

1. Why has the Sahel and West Africa Club given high priority to a retrospective and prospective approach at the regional level as a whole and its regional institutions?
2. What should be the principal objectives for our exchanges and strategic thinking in the course of the next two days and what are the expected results?
3. What could be the follow-up to this meeting?

### **1. Why have we given high priority to a retrospective and prospective approach?**

#### Brief presentation of the Sahel and West Africa Club

- Mrs. Thérèse Pujolle has just given a presentation on the Club and our partnership with ECOWAS. I will not elaborate on the Club's history. Let me nevertheless remind you of a few essential points: the Club was created in 1976 as a forum for the International Community to discuss and encourage strong support over the long-term for countries

in the region, victims of the drought. In 2001, taking into account the interdependence and complementarity of the Sahel with other countries in the region, the Club's Strategy and Policy Group decided to expand the Club's coverage to encompass all of West Africa. The Club then became the Sahel and West Africa Club.

- The Club works within a network consisting of West African government representatives, actors from civil society, the private sector as well as development and research agencies. It also works in close collaboration with West African development partners and international and regional organisations notably ROPPA, the CILSS, the WAEMU and ECOWAS, its principal partner in the region as a whole.
- Administratively attached to the OECD, the Club is led by a Secretariat composed of a small technical team of about twenty people whom I manage. The Club's Work Plan is subject to approval by its Strategy and Policy Group (SPG), its Board of Directors, comprised of representatives from contributing countries with the participation of African countries as well as the main regional partner institutions and networks.
- As a facilitator, moderator, leader of open constructive exchanges, the Club plays a bridging role, an interface between West African actors and OECD Member countries. Its main objectives are to:
  - Help identify strategic questions related to medium- and long-term development in West Africa;
  - Contribute to mobilising and strengthening African capacities within a network approach;
  - Support initiatives and efforts by West Africans to promote medium- and long-term development in the region;
  - Facilitate exchanges between regional actors and OECD Member countries;
  - Promote constructive debates that lead to innovative decisions, within and outside the region, aimed at building a better future for the region. These decisions concern notably the policy enabling environment; concrete actions to be undertaken on the ground; mobilisation and allocation of resources; implementation of new partnerships leading to immediate results and paving the way for a better future.
- The Club's methodological approach aims to support efforts undertaken by Africans. It is characterised by an iterative, consultative and participative process. It strives to have a multi-dimensional approach:

- A temporal approach encouraging “doni, doni” (slowly but surely);
  - A spatial approach, taking into account the complementarities between the local, national, regional, continental and international levels;
  - A “field” approach which listens to the expectations and concerns expressed by local actors;
  - A scientific, multidisciplinary approach;
  - A network approach;
  - An approach based on partnership.
- The Secretariat concentrates its efforts on four areas of interest for the region itself and for the international community:
    - Medium- and Long-Term Development Perspectives
    - Agricultural Transformation and Sustainable Development
    - Local Development and the Process of Regional Integration
    - Governance, Conflict Dynamics, Peace and Security
  - These areas of interest are consistent with the concerns for the region’s future expressed notably in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), in the Vision of the African Union and in the partnership agreement recently finalised between the Club and ECOWAS Secretariats.

### The Club gives high priority to a retrospective and prospective approach

- I would like briefly to recall the reasons which impel the Sahel and West Africa Club to give such priority to the medium- and long-term development perspectives of the region:
  - Firstly, Africans and their development partners are in demand. They have often expressed regret that the WALTPS<sup>3</sup> study, which was carried out in 1995 with the help of the Secretariat, was not followed through on a regular basis in order to learn from the past and keep a prospective view of the future.
  - Secondly, the cooperation framework between ECOWAS and the SWAC established in October 2004, gives high priority to the implementation of a joint undertaking for the development of a medium- and long-term development vision for West Africa.
  - Thirdly, following through on such an initiative is fully compliant with the role of the Secretariat, especially with regard to its contribution to informed debates on the future of the region.

- Lastly, this initiative is in line with the Secretariat's continuity and prospective culture.
- The Club strives to encourage the emergence of strategic questions of interest for the region itself and its development partners. It seems to us that one of the pivotal questions for the coming years will be: "Where and how will the 430 million West Africans live in the year 2020?"
- The Club also seeks to promote a balanced reading of the evolutions in West Africa and improve the understanding and confidence between various partners based on a better understanding of the region, having always these five questions in mind:
  - Where does West Africa come from?
  - Where is it now?
  - What are the desirable and possible futures for the region?
  - What new partnerships are needed for a better future for the region?
  - How should ECOWAS' role evolve within the regional, continental and global context? How should its role be complementary with other regional, continental and international organisations?
- The media coverage of events in West Africa often presents a pessimistic vision of the region. However, the dynamics of change observed over the long-term portray a very different reality. Over the last two decades the region has undergone significant social, cultural, institutional and political changes: new modes of governance; shift from a single-party to a multi-party system; expansion of the employment-generating informal sector; macro-economic and structural adjustments; economic liberalisation; changes in the configuration and role of the media; emergence of civil society's role in its professional or community-based representative organisations; evolution of women's rights in society; cultural life; predominance of youth in society, higher priority for local development and the regional integration process, to name but a few.
- The last thirty years has seen the emergence of several regional organisations like the WAEMU, ECOWAS, and the CILSS or regional initiatives such as the management of river basin water and NEPAD. Today, it is important while celebrating the 30th anniversary of ECOWAS to be able to take a look at the progress made in the region and ECOWAS and start to think about their future.
- Let's pause a moment on the dynamics of change underway over the last forty years as concerns the rapid population growth, which will be

one of the biggest challenges facing West Africa in the next few decades. The population growth in ECOWAS' fifteen member countries more than tripled between 1960 and 2005, going from 78 million to 260 million inhabitants. The lowest projections indicate that the region could reach or go beyond 400 million inhabitants by 2025/2030. A trend that is also observed within all of the countries covered by the Club including Mauritania, Chad and Cameroon where the population of the region grew from 85 million in 1960 to 290 million in 2003 and could reach 430 million by 2025/2030.

- This rise in population was accompanied by tremendous pressure on natural resources as well as socio-economic investments which, in any case, would have been highly insufficient even without rapid population increases. This situation has triggered many other challenges related to sustained economic growth, the creation of employment and management of migratory flows to urban areas both within the region and to developed countries. The importance of these challenges is exacerbated by the very high percentage of youth under 20 years of age (over 50% of the population).
- Hence four decades of unprecedented, dynamic urbanisation in the ECOWAS zone is not surprising. The urban population has risen nine-fold between 1960 and 2002 from 15 to 45% of the total population. It could even reach 60% of the population in one generation. The equivalent evolution in Europe took a century and a half (12% in 1800 to 42% on the eve of World War II). The population of Nouakchott, for example, was approximately 40 000 inhabitants in 1973, and today has reached almost 800 000 inhabitants. This major change created problems of adaptation, especially in urban/rural relations, territorial development, allocation of human and budgetary resources, modernisation of the economies, changes in societies' cultural and social fabric and finally the interdependence and complementarity at the local, regional and international levels.
- Therefore, the purpose here is not to say that "everything is going well" but rather to recognise the considerable efforts made by West Africans with the support of their development partners. These changes have certainly not taken place without facing severe problems. They have been impeded by problems related to governance, human security, national and international strategies and policies, new pandemics, ill-adapted training systems, the slow development of the local private

sector, tensions and conflicts often resulting from rapid changes in societies and the environment in which these societies are evolving.

- As we have indicated in this panel's Terms of Reference, the strategic thinking process on West African regional development perspectives that we are going to launch over the next two days fits perfectly within the framework of the concerns or preoccupations of the Club and ECOWAS. The aim is not to re-write history. All the material already exists (that is why we have prepared a non-exhaustive inventory of completed studies of which you will find a summary in the document we have given you). It seeks to bring forward the major long-term trends characterising the region.
- As regards this panel's prospective approach, some could ask why be interested in the region's future or ECOWAS in the year 2020 when the region is confronting its urgent needs such as security, poverty, etc. We are not seeking to eclipse this reality but rather go beyond the immediacy to contribute to building the future. The purpose of a prospective approach is not to predict the future. Rather it is to develop vision(s) of the desirable future. Prospective views should help identify the dynamics of current and potential changes that could serve as levers to creating the desirable futures, and hence should identify the challenges and risks along the way, so as to better address them. It is a useful tool for decision-making and strategic action including within the framework of the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

## **2. What should the main objectives be for our exchanges and strategic thinking over the next two days? What are the expected results?**

- In order for us to progress in our retrospective and prospective approach at the regional level as a whole and ECOWAS, we have agreed with ECOWAS to undertake a certain number of initiatives likely to further the strategic thinking already carried out on the region and ECOWAS and identify issues and key themes on those which could bring about strategic thinking and action over the coming years:
  - We have produced a working document which is available to you on the inventory of approximately 150 retrospective and prospective studies of interest for West Africa. The aim of this inventory is to compile the dynamics of change, challenges, risks, major long-term trends and strategic visions set out in these studies likely to clarify

the exchanges on the region's future. My colleague, Dominique Bangoura, will make a brief presentation this afternoon.

- With ECOWAS we have co-produced a regional Atlas of Transport and Telecommunications in the ECOWAS zone which is also available to you. We will produce a Comprehensive Atlas of Regional Integration within the next 18 months. As you all know, the regional integration process is now more than ever at the heart of the African economic and political agenda.

The African Union has made regional integration the linchpin of its Vision for the future. In West Africa, ECOWAS has, beyond its original mandate, been made responsible for the regional implementation of NEPAD and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. Those responsible for implementing this agenda have expressed a strong demand for analytical and decision-making tools at the regional level that will help clarify the stakes which obviously go beyond national borders: population, migratory movements, territorial development, natural resources, transport and communications, various languages and ethnicities.

Within West Africa, a regional approach will lead to a more effective and thus less costly management of population dynamics, water resources, transport systems, pandemics, livestock production, etc. Major efforts are being made in this direction, especially within the framework of ECOWAS, but there is still a need for greater synthesis work that describes the most critical regional development issues and shows the interactions and interdependencies between the various stakes (for example, "increasing population and transport"; "agricultural basins and migration"; "natural resources and conflict"). This was the objective when producing this regional Atlas. My colleague, Laurent Bossard, will make a brief presentation this afternoon.

### The main objectives of this meeting

As set out in the invitation letter which was sent to you by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas and myself, the objective of this meeting is not define scenarios on the region's evolution and ECOWAS. Rather it seeks to contribute to broader strategic thinking and decision-making processes encouraging informal and direct open exchanges with active members and representatives of West African society, building on your respective experiences. These exchanges could be based on:

- Your perspective of the region and ECOWAS' role;

- Your medium- and long-term vision of the region and of ECOWAS;
- Your identification of priority strategic questions in which to delve further and debate during the coming months, indeed the coming years, regarding the desirable and possible futures for the region and the evolution of ECOWAS' role as well as its visibility.

### The main expected results

- By inviting you to participate at this meeting, we truly hope to achieve at least the two following key results:
  - Contribute to a deeper understanding of the region and of ECOWAS;
  - Identify areas of strategic thinking and action – for the coming months as well as the years ahead – likely to respond to the regional populations' expectations as regards improving their well-being and quality of life in the immediacy as well as for future generations.
- The dynamics of change observed in West Africa, the challenges that West Africa has faced and must continue to confront as well as the risks and major long-term trends likely to affect its path towards a better future, can be grouped for example, under a certain number of themes:
  - **Demographic aspects:** migratory flows, predominance of youth in society, increasing urban dynamic, demographic shock, re-balancing of settlement areas, stakes concerning health, educational system and food security, management of pandemics, etc.
  - **Socio-political, institutional and geo-political aspects:** the democratisation process, crises and conflict management; new modes of governance, the emergence of political parties and civil society, human security, new world order, strengthening regional institutions, etc.
  - **Socio-economic aspects:** macro-economic and structural adjustments, economic liberalisation, economic growth, poverty reduction, attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, private sector's role, development of the informal sector and micro-finance, access to global markets, agricultural commodities and their access to markets, regionalisation of markets, lack of socio-economic infrastructure, debt burden, the impact of overseas development assistance, low foreign direct investment, etc.
  - **Socio-cultural aspects:** evolution of women's rights and their representation in society, access to information, changing configuration and role of the media, new information technologies,

artistic creation, African expertise, cultural identity, uniting within diversity or the diversity without unity, etc.

- During our exchange of views, and in the next steps following this meeting, a certain number of pitfalls should be avoided while putting into practice the retrospective and prospective work. I will limit myself to mention only a few:
  - We should not give the impression that medium- and long-term strategic thinking is pointless in a context where immediate action is essential to reduce poverty, to attain the Millennium Development Goals, to confront conflicts and all sorts of crises. We have to keep in mind that medium- and long-term strategic thinking is not to put off decision-making and concrete action on the ground but rather to anticipate what must be done taking into account the changes underway and foreseeable at the local, national, continental and international levels.
  - We should not underestimate the complementarity and interdependence that exists between different levels (local, national, regional, continental and global) of construction of the West African region.
  - We should not consider that urgent and short-term management – even though vital and necessary – is enough to reduce the gap between the desirable and possible futures.
  - We should not approach all the dimensions of the desirable and possible futures at the same time. We need to identify key issues to analyse and debate in order to mobilise all the actors involved in the decision-making process and action to benefit the greatest number of people.
  - We should not confuse inevitability and uncertainty. These two types of situation call for different decision-making and action processes.
  - We should not make projections and dreams for the future without having a specific goal on which strategic thinking is carried out.
  - We should not think that consensus on the desirable and possible futures for the region will be easily obtained. A consultation process with all development and negotiating partners being able to lead to pragmatic decisions geared towards action is always essential.
  - We should not think that only one meeting is going to solve everything. In effect, it is a forum where some strategic areas can be defined leading to decisions and actions by identifying key issues to examine; decision-makers, actors and partners involved; the time

needed in order undertake concrete actions on the ground; the information and awareness process.

- At the workshops which will take place this afternoon and tomorrow, we have the opportunity to come back to the methodology to follow so as not to lose sight of the objectives of our work.
- In brief, our exchanges should allow us to support a strategic thinking and action process concerning the key questions regarding medium- and long-term development of the region and ECOWAS, processes which can help transform information into a vision, vision into action, and the desirable and possible futures with a view to improving the lives and security for all.
- For each of the principal development aspects of the region which I have briefly touched upon, there are imperative issues that exist which will have a determining impact on the desirable and possible futures for the region and ECOWAS. For example, allow me to suggest a few that I have grouped under different aspects. I would like to emphasise that these aspects are not restrictive and should not be perceived as a rigid framework for our exchanges. Furthermore, I fully realise that the issues that I raise as examples, are already too numerous for all of them to be examined in the course of our work and that there are even more issues that you are going to raise which we will try to examine.
  - **Concerning demographic aspects**, as I said earlier, we ask ourselves the pivotal question: where and how will the 430 million inhabitants of the geographic area covered by the Club live in the year 2020? What will be the desirable and possible futures for the youth which make up more than 55% of the population? What will the migratory movements be? What will the impact of this demographic growth be on poverty in the region, food security, educational and health systems, housing and employment?
  - **Concerning socio-political, institutional and geo-political aspects**, the vital questions are also numerous. What modes of governance? What should the role of political parties, civil society and the media be? Political changes and the emergence of the new generation and creating new political parties? Conflicts and crises dynamics: how to manage them? How to improve human security? Africa's position as regards the rest of the world, a changing world in rapid evolution notably with the emergence of China as a significant partner for Africa? The evolution of the role of regional institutions,

professional groupings, producers' associations, women's groups, youth movements? The role of development partners?

- **Concerning socio-economic aspects**, we can ask what investments, where, for who and by whom? What type of territorial development will be needed and what will be the future rural/urban relations? What part of the increasing population can be absorbed by the rural sector? Otherwise, where will the population go and what will they do? How to improve the management of natural resources and regional public goods to benefit the greatest number of people? What is the respective role of the State – at the local and national levels – and the private sector? Will the political environment and international trade practices be favourable? What to do about this? What is Africa's interest in developing a regional and continental vision? How can this vision be made a reality? What institutions are necessary and what do they need to do? What important initiatives should be set up and at what level: local, national, regional, continental?
- **Concerning socio-cultural aspects**, here also are a large of number of questions to ask. Questions as regards identity; constructing a social unit while respecting diversity; transformation of rural culture into an increasingly urban culture; going from a culture of continuous sustainable consensus to a culture of alternatives; evolution of women's role and the place of youth in societies; information, communication and artistic creation.

### 3. What could be the follow-up to this meeting?

- Of course, all of these questions and many others cannot be examined in-depth during our two day meeting. We must be strategic, pragmatic and concrete in selecting key questions of interest for the region, questions which will be able to be further examined, worked on, negotiated, for decisions and concrete actions on the ground, according to a timeframe to be envisaged and modalities to be defined.
  - Thus in our exchanges, we need to retain the following key characteristics in our approach:
  - Our approach is anchored in a retrospective knowledge of the region.
  - It concerns informed debate on certain strategic aspects of the desirable and possible futures of the region leading to decision-making.

- This approach aims to show how the construction of the West African region can contribute to creating desirable futures for the region in the immediate term, of course, but also over the medium- and long-term. This approach is based on the idea that different constructions at the local, national regional and continental levels are interdependent and complementary.
- It aims also to identify how ECOWAS' role should evolve in the regional, continental, and global context and its complementarity with other regional, continental and international organisations.

This brings me to providing you with a few ideas on regional integration and the evolution of ECOWAS' role:

- As specific as it may be, an issue must be "placed" from a geographical and historical standpoint. This framework is particularly important when we work on the regional integration process in West Africa from which an a-spatial and a-temporal analysis systematically emerges on a not very encouraging diagnostic of immobilism, indeed failure. On the other hand, in putting this process back into context in its place and time, the conclusions are increasingly positive and motivating, validating efforts undertaken at all levels in order to build West African regional integration.

### **Concerning regional integration:**

- In 1970, West Africa had about 90 million inhabitants of which 80% were essentially rural geared towards self-sufficiency, no true market dynamic could support a regional integration project. It is nevertheless within this not very favourable context for integration that the first regional economic community was created in the mid-1970s, which then became ECOWAS.
- Some 30 years later, this situation has changed considerably. West Africa is on the point of having 300 million inhabitants. Economic areas are connected to each other beyond borders. The urban demand is infinitely more important so that the regional population is reaching or will go beyond 50% of urbanites. Demographic and economic conditions for creating a regional market finally exist.

### **Concerning the evolution of ECOWAS' role:**

- Since its creation in 1975, its mandate has greatly evolved. Created in order to encourage regional integration, during the last decade

ECOWAS has been increasingly sought out as a policy management tool in the region. This has been the case notably in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and more recently in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. Two significant actions have led to the expansion of its mandate by its Member States: in 1999 through the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security; and in 2001, through the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which still awaits ratification by several Member States. This last Protocol takes into account a large group of societal issues: follow-up of elections; poverty reduction; free circulation of goods and people; promotion of social dialogue, education, culture and religion; human rights; women, children and the youth.

- If conflict and crisis management mobilises a significant part of ECOWAS' energy, the countries of the region now more than ever need a regional economic structure to support them in their fight against poverty within the context of economic globalisation and open markets where only the large economic blocs can compete on a very competitive world market. ECOWAS' role as a complementary regional structure at the local and national levels should be essential for West African economic and policy development for decades to come.

To conclude, I would like you to know that we envisage producing a synthesis document from this first meeting that ECOWAS will be able to submit to its decision-making bodies, and notably at its next Summit of Heads of State. Furthermore, from the year 2006 on, we envisage the co-production, by ECOWAS and the SWAC, of an Annual Report on West Africa (an assessment) and on the visions expressed by Africans and their development partners for a better future. Some priority themes could be raised each year. This Report will help group together the results of analyses, consultations, debates, publications and decisions, desirable and possible futures for the region. It is with this view that, over the next few days, we will discuss the evolution of the Panel's role during the next year.

I am convinced that the work undertaken over the next two days will significantly contribute to bringing strategic thinking and action forward on the medium- and long-term development perspectives of the region, the regional integration process and the evolution of ECOWAS' role.

*Thank you.*



## II. Background

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This section summarizes the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat's reading of the region, the regional integration process and the evolution of ECOWAS.

The work reflects the outcomes of activities developed in partnership with organisations and personalities in West Africa, as well as the member countries of the Sahel and West Africa Club.

This section contains information that will enable members of the Panel to consider top priority the dynamics of transformation in the region as motors behind the attainment of desired futures while bearing in mind the following questions as a starting point:

**Where is West Africa coming from?**

**Where is it now?**

**What are the desirable and possible futures for the region?**

**What new partnerships should be established for a better future for the region?**

**How should ECOWAS' role evolve in the regional, continental and global context and how should it complement the work of other regional, continental and international organisations?**



# 1. The region

## What is the state of the region?

### A region in transformation

It seemed important and useful to develop an analysis of West Africa which, while recognising the problems and challenges facing this region, focuses on the dynamics of transformation and integration underway. During its history, West Africa has experienced profound changes. As such, it should not be perceived as a region in stagnation but rather in a process of change, capable of undergoing major adaptations and progress, which can be considered as assets.

Media coverage of events in West Africa often depicts a pessimistic vision of the region. However, the dynamics of transformation observed in the long term provide quite a different picture. Over the past twenty years, the region has undergone major social, cultural, institutional and political change. Here are just a few examples: new governance methods, move from single-party to multi-party States; expansion of the informal job generating sector; macroeconomic and structural adjustments; deregulation of savings; change in the configuration and role of the media; emergence of the role of civil society in representative, professional or associative organisations; evolution of women's rights and of their representation in society; cultural creativity; predominance of young people in society; stronger priority given to local development and the regional integration process.

### Demographic growth

Whereas the population of the fifteen ECOWAS countries tripled between 1960 and 2005, increasing from 78 to 260 million people, the lowest forecasts indicate that the region's population could exceed 400 million by 2025/2030.

This trend is also observed in the countries covered by the SWAC (ECOWAS Member Countries plus Mauritania, Chad and Cameroon) whose population increased from 85 million in 1960 to 290 million in 2003, and could reach 430 million by 2025/2030.

This demographic growth has put tremendous pressure on natural resources and on social and economic investments that are evidently insufficient to

meet demand. It has intensified the challenges in terms of economic growth and job creation. It has induced heavy migration towards cities within the region and towards developed countries, which is very difficult to manage. The very high proportion of young people under 20 years of age (over 55% of the population) also adds to these challenges.

## **Urbanisation**

It is therefore not surprising that all ECOWAS countries have experienced unprecedented urbanisation over the last forty years: urban population increased nine-fold between 1960 and 2002, going from 15 to 45% of the total population. It could reach 60% of the population within the next generation. The equivalent evolution in Western Europe took a century and a half (from 12% in 1800 to 42% on the eve of the Second World War). The population of Nouakchott, for example, was approximately 40,000 in 1973, now reaches almost 800,000. These major transformations have incurred several adaptation problems especially in urban/rural relations, territorial development, food safety, allocation of human and budgetary resources, the modernisation of economies and changes in societies' cultural and social fabric.

## **Agriculture, livestock breeding and food security**

The rural sector in the region, and especially in Sahel countries, has had to face several challenges in recent years. The following problems are relevant in this context:

- Precarious food security, especially in fragile ecological zones;
- Malfunctioning of certain food crisis information and forecasting systems;
- Frequently insufficient cereal stocks;
- Climatic difficulties and recurring desert locust outbreaks;
- Difficult access to and distribution of agricultural inputs and innovations;
- Tensions linked to land tenure;
- Insufficient rain and surface water;
- Major shifts in the price of cattle and cereals;
- Competitiveness and positioning of agricultural products on local, national, regional and world markets.

But who would have thought that West and Central Africa would produce almost a million tonnes of cotton annually, i.e. 17% of global exports in 2004 as opposed to 4% in 1980? Who would have believed that producers would

organise themselves into professional associations, that the rural sector would be highly liberalised and that agricultural production, especially subsistence crops, could have – to a large extent – kept up with the very rapid population increase? A retrospective and prospective analysis conducted in 2003 by the SWAC Secretariat<sup>4</sup> has shown, for example, that in Burkina Faso, rice and maize yields tripled between 1961 and 1998 whereas average rainfall fell by 20%. There are other representative examples in the ECOLOC<sup>5</sup> studies. On a per capital basis, West Africa does not import more foodstuffs than it did 40 years ago. If we consider urban and rural communities separately we see that per capita food imports in 1990 were comparable to those of the 1960s. Between 1960 and now, the urban population of West Africa has grown by 100 million (migrants from the rural area and urban births). Even with weak purchasing power, they have constituted a powerful engine for the development of agro-food production and trade.

This information leads to the conclusion that in this region significant and rapid changes have taken place with regard to agricultural production and trade. Accordingly, the perception of the West African rural sector must be based on a clear understanding of the dynamics of change that have taken place while continually taking on recurrent problems in ecologically fragile zones and the most vulnerable populations in terms of revenue and food security. If not, it will be very difficult to identify appropriate ways to respond to challenges in this field. The purpose is not to say that everything is going well in the rural sector but rather to underline that there are ongoing dynamics of change that need to be strongly supported in order to improve farmers' revenue and to reduce poverty in rural areas; to guarantee food security in the region; to intensify investments in the rural environment, notably in territorial development; to improve competitiveness of agricultural products within the framework of the expanding regional market; or to deal with the large population increase in the region expected over the next 25 years.

### **Private sector, financial institutions and the diaspora**

Over the last three decades, the private sector has undergone major changes and played an important role in promoting the region's socio-economic development. In the wake of independence, this sector was very weak, often subsidised and heavily dependent on State monopolies. Today, the private sector in the region is much more dynamic and includes companies of all sizes – from micro to macro – often with women entrepreneurs, food-processing companies, and new partnerships between public and

4. C. Toulmin and Bara Gueye, "Transformation in West African Agriculture and the Role of Family Farms" (June 2003).

5. In the Sikasso zone (Mali), from 1977 to 1997, maize production increased from 10,000 to 70,000 tonnes. At the same time, the cotton surface rose from 15,000 to 78,000 ha and yields declined. The ratio between cotton and cereal surfaces rapidly changed to the benefit of the latter then stabilised at around 30/55. The start of crop rotation and the combination of cereal and livestock production is replacing traditional itinerant farming. The next challenge is that of the disappearance of fallow land and the regeneration of soil. (The local economy of Sikasso, case study in the ECOLOC Programme - Club du Sahel/OECD, July 1998).

private sector. This sector has striven to improve its competitiveness and achieve better positioning on the regional and global markets. Moreover, governments in the region have realised, over the past few years, that a dynamic and competitive private sector was crucial to stimulate economic growth and increase the population's revenue.

In parallel, the informal economy has developed exponentially. As job opportunities in the formal sector are insufficient for the majority of the population, many people are forced to look elsewhere to find means of subsistence. It should therefore come as no surprise that the highly labour-intensive informal economy has developed over the past decades both in the peri-urban and rural sectors to meet the demand of large towns/capitals, secondary towns or the rural environment for products and services. These activities absorb a large share of young workers and migrants and provide a source of income, as precarious as it may be, to a rapidly expanding and economically and socially vulnerable population.

However, improvements and changes still need to be made to introduce different areas:

- Political;
- Building of an open and dynamic regional market;
- Tax;
- Support of financial/banking institutions and national and regional insurance companies;
- Investment conditions in a climate of improved confidence and security;
- Basic socio-economic infrastructure: education, health, transport and communications;
- Transparent management;
- Productive reinvestment of profits and revenue, including by members of the diaspora who can play an even more effective role as regards productive investments in their country of origin and in the region.
- Better understanding of the role of the informal economy and adoption of supporting policies and measures.

### **Crises and conflicts**

The crises and conflicts that have affected West Africa for more than over a decade are, to a certain degree, the downside of dynamics of change experienced in the region. They are also the consequence of changes which

have taken place within as well as outside the region on the institutional, economical, political, social and cultural levels.

The changes experienced by West Africa are accompanied by tensions that incur risks and challenges. In the region, undeniable natural and cultural wealth goes hand in hand with high social poverty, accentuated by major differences between town and country, economic centres and peripheral communities, the elite and the masses. This contradiction is a fundamental structural factor in the determination of conflict. The stakes involved are: the renewal of the State, the emergence of a new form of citizenship, the demands of better consideration of cultural, social and political diversity. A good perception of these stakes may be masked by factors that destabilise and disturb the democratic process. They need to be taken into account and can represent challenges. In particular, they are:

- Coups d'état or putsch attempts, whereas these illegal forms of access to power were supposed to be bygone in the wake of the National Conferences;
- The development, followed by the multiplication of pockets of armed rebellion that considerably destabilise the entire region;
- The recurrence of electoral disagreements in a large number of countries and a governance crisis that results in the paralysis or isolation of certain State or government bodies;
- The acuity of human security problems.

All of these difficulties – which are risks and challenges for the region – should not eclipse or prevent the tackling of the essential issue of which they are a product and which they point to, i.e. peace-building and democracy in Africa in a context of profound change. This requires control of conflict developments that are a severe test on regional stability, socio-political balance and economic potential. In these conditions, it is important to identify vital strategic issues for the region's future.

### **Change in the institutional regional environment**

For the past thirty years, several regional organisations such as the WAEMU, ECOWAS and the CILSS or regional initiatives (management of the water resources of major rivers, NEPAD) have been created. The celebration of ECOWAS' 30th anniversary provided the opportunity to take a retrospective and prospective look at progress made in the region, its institutions and, in particular, the evolution of ECOWAS' role. (See Point 2 on regional integration and Point 3 on ECOWAS.)

## Changes in the international environment

ECOWAS countries and West African countries as a whole have also had to deal with profound changes in the international environment.

- (i) Demographically, Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, since the early 1990s, is the last-ranked continent in terms of rapid population growth.
- (ii) Economically, the world has moved from the practically exclusive pre-eminence of North America, Europe and Japan, to the emergence of South-East Asian countries, then of China, India and Latin America. Global agriculture is durably committed to over-production thus accentuating competition and leading to support policies (subsidies) in developed countries. Global demand in energy and raw materials, mainly extractives, is set in a long-term growth process. New information technology has created new opportunities and even a “new economy” in which the least advanced countries struggle to position themselves.
- (iii) Politically, east-west opposition is no longer the backbone of international relations. South Africa has overthrown apartheid and has joined the OAU, now the African Union, with a new vision and new ambitions. The participation of African countries at the UN Security Council is currently under discussion.
- (iv) Culturally, globalisation suddenly accelerated in the mid-1990s and has affected people’s thinking, music and fashion trends. It has definitively reached urban Africa and partly reached rural Africa.

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## Who could have forecasted this?

In the 1960s, no development plan had forecast the upheavals which, in West Africa, have transformed apparently stable societies into changing societies. None of the forecasts had anticipated the political, technological and economic upheavals that have so profoundly shaken this region and the world as a whole.

- It would therefore be presumptuous to claim today that it is possible to “predict the future” of this region.
- It is however possible to identify phenomena at work today where there is sufficient inertia to suggest that they will still be issues of importance in the future.

- It is in fact indispensable to get off the beaten track and take a bold approach by recalling that possible futures often go well beyond what seemed predictable at first.
- That is why it is crucial that a debate on the future be fuelled and promoted through actors and factors of change: the youth, girls and women, leaders of civil society associations, political parties, the media, academics, researchers, cultural creators, locally elected officials and economic actors working on the ground.

The aim of this prospective approach is not to predict the future. Its function is to highlight one or two visions of desirable futures and, in doing so, contribute to building the future. The prospective approach should help to identify dynamics of change – existing and potential – that can serve as levers to achieve these futures<sup>6</sup>. It should also highlight the challenges and risks that arise along the way in order to overcome them. It is therefore a precious decision-making and strategic action tool.

*6. An appraisal of the Prospective Approach to Africa, directed by Messrs Philippe Hugon and Olivier Sudrie, Minister of Foreign Affairs (France), September 1999, page 10.*

## Where is the region heading?

The dynamics of change in West Africa, the challenges it has faced and still needs to overcome, and the risks that might affect its progress towards a better future may be grouped together under a certain number of themes. (The different points developed under each of these themes are indicative; they are not an exhaustive list.)

- Demographic and population aspects: migration flows, predominance of young people in society, dynamic urban growth, demographic shock, reshaping of populated areas, health and educational issues, food security, pandemic management, etc.
- Socio-political, institutional and geopolitical aspects: democratisation process, crisis and conflict management, new governance modes, movement from a consensus culture to an alternation culture, emergence of political parties and civil society, human security, new world balances, creation and reinforcement of regional institutions, etc.
- Socio-economic aspects: macroeconomic and structural adjustments, economic liberalisation, economic growth, transformation of the rural sector and food security, fight against poverty, attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, role of the private sector, development of the informal sector and micro-finance, access to world markets,

agricultural industries and their outlets, regionalisation of markets, insufficient socio-economic infrastructure, debt burden, impact of public development aid, low foreign direct investment, role of the diaspora, etc.

- Socio-cultural aspects: personal rights, evolution of women's rights and their representation in society, access to information, changes in the configuration and role of the media, new information technology, artistic creativity, cultural identity, unity in diversity or diversity without unity.

## 2. Regional integration

It is particularly important to provide an historical and geographical framework to better understand the regional process in West Africa. An analysis with no temporal or spatial context usually depicts a sad situation of immobility and even failure. However, by putting this process into its spatial and temporal context, conclusions are more positive and motivating, giving meaning to the efforts made at all levels to establish regional West African integration.

In 1970, whereas West Africa had a population of 90 million, of which 80% was rural, mainly self-sufficient, no real market momentum could support a regional integration project. It was nevertheless in this rather unfavourable context for integration that the first regional economic communities (REC) were created in the 1970s, the most important one being ECOWAS.

Some thirty years later, the situation has changed considerably. West Africa is on the verge of reaching a population of 300 million. Regional economic communities are forging ties, reaching beyond national borders. Urban demand is infinitely greater, as the regional urban population is about to reach and exceed 50%. The demographic and economic conditions for the creation of a regional market are gradually being met.

In the wake of independence, the focus was on the construction of the nation-state with the idea that national unity should override diversity. With time, and especially in the early 1990s, several countries in the region gave a higher priority to the promotion of local initiatives and decentralisation. This new approach drastically modifies the implementation conditions of a certain number of national sector-based policies, in particular health, education and infrastructure. The emergence of a local decision-making level, complementary to the national level, has an impact on the construction of West African regional integration. Although political cooperation, monetary integration and the establishment of joint customs, financial and insurance regulations remain the exclusive competence of States, individually and collectively, the concerns of cross-border local authorities for their new areas of competence should be increasingly taken into consideration at the national and regional level.

Moreover, regional integration is obviously making a strong comeback on the African political and economic agenda:

- The African Union has made it the key feature of its future vision;
- The implementation of the NEPAD broadly depends on a regional approach anchored in the mandate given to ECOWAS in this field;
- Regional integration is defined as the cornerstone and even the initial stage of the Economic Partnership Agreements between the European Union and ACP countries. In West Africa, ECOWAS, plus Mauritania, has been assigned with implementing this agreement;
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are being extended to take into account the regional dimensions of poverty and efforts to be made to reduce it, with the prospect of accelerated economic growth in each of the countries founded on the promotion of local initiatives and regional complementarities to be strengthened and developed.

Regional decision-makers and development partners call for regional analytical tools to address issues which obviously transcend national borders. Within the regional area, several strategic decisions need to be made, especially concerning more efficient and therefore more cost-effective concerted management of the population dynamic, water management, transportation systems, the fight against major pandemics, agriculture and livestock farming, education and health systems.

### 3. ECOWAS

Since it was created in 1975, the mandate and role of ECOWAS have changed considerably. Initially set up to promote regional integration, ECOWAS has tended to intervene more in conflict and crisis management in the region over the past decade. This was notably the case in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and more recently in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. This has led to the extension of its mandate by Member States on two occasions: in 1999 through the Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security; and in 2001, through the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance which still needs to be ratified by certain Member States. This Protocol takes into account a broader set of social issues: monitoring of elections; poverty reduction; free circulation of goods and persons; promotion of social dialogue; education, culture and religion; human rights; women, children and young people.

Although conflict and crisis management mobilises a large share of ECOWAS energies, more than ever, the countries in the region need a regional economic structure to support them in their development and poverty-reduction efforts. Within the context of economic globalisation and the opening of markets where only the major economic blocs can contend in an increasingly competitive market, the role of ECOWAS as a regional structure, complementary to local and national levels, has become paramount.

Ambitious projects have been developed in this field, in particular:

- The creation of a single currency (the Eco) for countries in the West African Monetary Zone (Guinea, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) with the prospect of a merger between the Eco and the CFA Franc;
- The regional agricultural policy;
- The transportation facilitation plan;
- Joint or concerted actions in the health sector, through the West African Health Organisation;
- A strategy aimed to promote cross-border cooperation.

These projects, and others, are still far from reaching fruition, but the undeniable acceleration of progress made in the joint definition of policies and strategies over the past few years brings hope.

ECOWAS still suffers from a lack of communication and perception of its action in the region. Although much of the population is aware of and appreciates its role in conflict management, the action of the Executive Secretariat in socio-economic development is still largely unknown. How can this be remedied? This is a question of interest to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and its Member States, as to its future role with respect to the needs of a rapidly changing region and its development perspectives in the short, medium and long-term.

### III. Synthesis of debates: some perspectives for the region

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2. Changing populations and societies \_\_\_\_\_ 50
3. Construction of the regional area \_\_\_\_\_ 54
4. ECOWAS and progress made in regional integration 58
5. The region's future and prospects  
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The diversity of the panel made for vigorous, unrestricted and forthright debates. Besides the variety of participants' experiences, this seminar provided an opportunity for free expression, without reference to ideology, as a forum for discussion on West Africa.

Major differences emerged in the main themes. The issues concerning the future are obviously voiced in many other institutional forums; but this meeting emphasised a determination to hear the viewpoint of citizens involved in the transformation of their society. For these men and women, the debates brought messages from West African civil society, still in its infancy, that go beyond national borders and divisions caused by recent history.

Participants discussed regional developments over the past thirty or forty years, compared their analyses on the state of societies and shared their concerns for the future. In so doing, they raised five "clusters" of questions, calling on decision-makers and institutions to take better account of the expectations of West African citizens.

The major results of these discussions have been listed below in five sections, with the aim of maintaining the vivacity of discussions and highlighting areas of divergence and convergence. The questions and strategic thinking raised in this section are true to the opinions expressed by most actors; some have been reproduced in full.

## 1. Building peace and democracy

### The hardship of conflict.....

The hardship of conflict experienced by the region over the past fifteen years rekindles strategic thinking on the stakes of building democracy. To understand, it is necessary to go back to the independence years.

Access to independence involved the accession of new nations, as States defined by the colonial powers. With few exceptions, the nation-state was built on a territory whose borders ignored solidarity created by ancient populations. Attempts at federation rapidly failed.

At the same time, most new nations have experienced military coups. Personal power relying on a single party put an end to multiparty politics.

In the name of national development, presidential power, often supported by the army, manages national resources and international aid without democratic control.

This evolution, through its excesses, results in two demands expressed in varying degrees. The demand for democracy emerged during 1989-90 in national conferences and the rediscovery of multiparty politics. The demand for regional integration is more recent; it first emerged through the initiatives of civil society actors.

Women's movements for peace (Mano River) or youth movements for peace (Casamance) have played a lesser-known role to re-establish solidarity between populations displaced by conflict and to reduce violence; they have thus invented "African humanitarian action".

Traditional cross-border cooperation has grown significantly in the context of decentralisation, between local elected representatives, between professional organisations, and between public service employees (health), everywhere where States are unable to meet the population's needs.

Today, civil society actors, who are also promoters of peace and democracy, demand civil peace, regional peace and participation in the decision-making process.

## Democratic governance.....

These observations have raised questions on the establishment of democratic governance in the region.

The western democratic model anchors the legitimacy of power on regular use of the electoral process, in compliance with the Constitution. Elections should be free, transparent and open to all parties.

*Is this pattern simply some sort of imported "one size fits all"? Does the multiparty system meet the demand for democracy?*

Criticism of political parties was strong. Their multiplication on tribal, regional or ethnic bases often transforms elections into high risk confrontations, accompanied by violence.

*Is the sole agenda of political parties to win power?*

The democratic electoral process causes destabilisation that is especially long-lasting when the opposition and losers have no access to decision- and policy-making in the nation. The multiparty system could thus result in restoring the single-party system if the winning party resorts to methods that exclude the opposition from decision-making or from the administration.

*Should this trend in the democratic process be compared with other models of power legitimisation, excluding the use of force, like the restoration of traditional structures and practices (“chefferies” or tribal kingdoms, sultanates, discussions under the village tree, sacred forests)? Is it possible to invent new democratic powers established by civil society organisations?*

The seminar did not in the end challenge the western model but called for political reconstruction. This requires that:

- The Constitution may only be amended in compliance with democratic legality;
- Political parties are set up on the basis of agendas that refer to social projects;
- Free, high quality media (controlled by a regulating authority) enhances public debate;
- Political competition is not confiscated by the urban elites;
- The democratic debate takes place in languages spoken or understood by everyone;
- Intellectuals carry out their duties as “educated people” towards society.
- Invention of this pacific democratic control by civil actors implies the rejection of all power acquired by force and, in particular, requires joint strategic thinking on the role of the military in a democracy.

.....

Participants expressed their common concerns as a “lesson to all”.

The Ivoirian crisis has seen the rise of a new form of nationalism in the region revolving around the notion of national identity. All participants provided examples of population solidarity, cross-border family ties, cultural proximity and socio-economic solidarity that contrast with this trend.

*Are the control of national resources and the promotion of nationalism not related? If an oligarchy uses the State as an instrument to control national wealth, does it not lose its legitimacy?*

Demand for democracy is as much a desire to go beyond national borders, inherited from colonisation, in order to promote regional integration.

Regional integration appears as the driving force which, it is hoped, will go beyond conflicts and guarantee civil peace by anchoring democratic practices at the State and regional levels.

*Is the Nation State a relevant entity for West African solidarity?*

## 2. Changing populations and societies

Participants, on the basis of their experience, discussed societies' problems but also issues related to current changes in West Africa.

### The demographic issue, migration.....

Demographic growth needs to be assessed at the regional level. A State-by-State approach overlooks the underlying trends; migration and mobility within the region (and beyond) are populations' prime strategy against poverty.

In a war situation, displaced populations or refugees try to become integrated into host areas by leveraging population solidarity.

Urbanisation is the major change; the city is a centre of economic growth. Migration has no borders and capital cities attract migrants from all States in the region.

International donors fund poverty-reduction actions at the national level. In post-conflict situations, international aid tries to bring back displaced populations to their original areas, whereas many of them would like to settle elsewhere.

*How can the regional space be developed in order to encourage or structure economic growth zones capable of welcoming mobile populations? Which medium-sized towns could be equipped? What urban fabric should be set up around cross-border zones?*

So far, these projective issues, although crucial, do not appear to have been fully taken into account by regional institutions.

## The new power of the private sector.....

In forty years, the weakening of the State has led to a decisive transformation; the private sector, hitherto inhibited by interventionism, has largely developed as an informal sector. It is only now recognised as the main economic actor.

The private sector, which is liberal by definition, expects the State to guarantee authority, ensure compliance with the rules and prevent certain actors (sometimes on the government payroll) from exploiting businesses.

The private sector requires regional integration; the production of African goods and the provision of services are possible through the regional market.

## The emergence of civil society organisations (CSOs)...

The associative (or non-profit-making) private sector has partly developed against a humanitarian backdrop (drought in the Sahel, conflicts) where associations have replaced the public authorities in helping victims.

This social innovation was amplified by democratisation during the 1990s. Even though it is legitimate to raise questions concerning the vague structuring of CSOs, they have nevertheless imposed social modernisation throughout the region. New social groups have emerged and are no longer afraid to confront politicians.

## Affirmation of local powers.....

The influence of local powers has increased as (the State has weakened and) decentralisation has grown. Locally, new actors (women, farmers, youth) have become involved in decision-making processes, thus reinventing grass-roots democracy.

## The media: a new democratic actor?.....

The role of the private and public media (the press and audiovisual media, press agencies) has been enhanced by technological developments. It is now seen as an ambivalent social actor, depending on whether it is at the service of those in power or endeavours to act as a free information vector.

The well-established communication and information role of community radios in local languages is fully recognised as a force for social change.

The globalisation of information, the rights and duties of journalists and the private funding, independence and professionalism of the media are all contemporary issues now appropriated by West African societies and on which they judge their politicians.

## Women: new political actors?.....

The importance of women in social and economic life and their role in associations (poverty reduction, small companies and the health of young mothers) are fully recognised. However, access to the national political arena (parliament, government) remains rare. As a result, these capabilities tend to be captured by international institutions and, more rarely, by regional institutions.

The struggle for the recognition of the status and rights of women and girls continues through CSOs and outside support, but remains difficult. Inroads have gradually been made in terms of claims to the right to education and the right to self-determination, but regional institutions still need to make a permanent commitment to these issues.

Impunity for violence suffered by women in times of war and peace has not really been condemned.

As elsewhere in the world, women's access to political life depends on circumstances. Recognition of this right does not guarantee it in practice.

## Youth: a problem or a promise?.....

Youth movements (students' unions, young farmers' associations, etc.) declare that "youth is sacrificed".

Authorities fear pupil and student contestation and the violence of street children. Unemployed youths are considered to be an unsolvable social problem.

The enrolment of child-soldiers, the manipulation of young militia by parties, migration on the grounds of poverty, prostitution and trafficking are familiar themes for the international media. Youth with no access to education and without job opportunities are condemned to lives without hope.

Young people denounce confiscation of political power and social inequality. They want to prove their ability to invent a better world, have proper jobs, express their creative talents and live in a spirit of fraternity.

*How should these messages be taken into account? Which social projects might federate and give hope of a better future?*

## What is the future of the agricultural world? .....

The spokesperson for farming organisations brought participants' attention to the issue of the pauperisation of the rural world. He wondered whether national development did not actually "drain the rural base of African societies until exhaustion". "African agriculture has been handed over to outside experts who have declared it to be archaic and inadequate for the world market", he said. He called for the restoration of African food sovereignty on the regional level, for the real construction of the regional agricultural market and for genuine trust to be shown in African farmers' capabilities.

Discussions moderated this approach, recalling that regional institutions need to set up a determined policy to develop the regional space and structure new settlements in line with the geographic breakdown of both urban and rural populations.

But all participants agreed on the importance of this issue at a time when hunger once more hits the poorest rural populations in the region.

## Knowledge, technological capabilities: a forgotten dimension? .....

Participants tackled this issue from various angles.

An initial observation highlighted the lack of regional knowledge, information and basic statistics on demography, agricultural production and exports. West Africa's real weight in terms of population and economic capabilities is not known.

*Regional research centres have been left to disappear; universities have been abandoned; a "brain drain" has set in. African capacity to analyse has thus been lost. On this basis, how might a vision be created?*

This deficiency has led African political decision-makers to consult private and public experts who are paid by external funds instead of consolidating and using African capacities, whether in terms of economic governance or natural resources. Consequently, Africans have lost self-confidence in their ability to take responsibility for the future of societies.

Experts working for international institutions compile databases and drive national decisions. This country approach to issues such as structural adjustment, debt and poverty reduction overlooks regional development dimensions.

This also compromises the emergence of a West African identity based on a common future.

*How can the region be integrated into the “knowledge society” currently supported and dominated by the great Western and Asian powers? In particular, how can West Africa gain ownership of new technologies? How can the region become an actor and not just a secondary consumer?*

### **3. Construction of the regional area**

Participants analysed progress made in regional construction over the past thirty years.

The regional space is structured at grass-roots level, by the achievement of major regional projects and by institutions.

These three dimensions to the process have different prospects, on which the participants commented on the basis of their experience.

#### **Grass-roots integration.....**

West African populations experience and drive integration despite borders and divisions caused by colonisation.

The mobility of people and goods is the best illustration of this. Today, this mobility occurs mainly on roads, whatever their condition.

Traditional economic migration towards labour pools (ports, capitals, intensive farming production areas – groundnut, cotton, cocoa, etc.) has

long-established rules (seasonal norias or limited in years) guaranteeing circulation of revenue between the farming and new urban communities.

Demographic growth, rural pauperisation and conflicts have modified this borderless migration that has become definitive and produces over-population in shanty towns.

There are many reasons for travel: family alliances, traditional celebrations, major seasonal markets and pilgrimages. Travellers use taxis, minibuses and trucks that frequently cross borders, often outside customs points.

Regional trade, be it informal or “official”, is the major grass-roots integration driver. Networks and journeys may be well-established and traditional (kola, transhumance) or modern and recent (cotton, imported goods).

Transporters and truckers are often better informed about the state of the roads and bridges and on fuelling points than government authorities. They are more aware of the effects of the Ivorian crisis on the reshaping of transit commercial routes than politicians.

There are no significant statistics on the annual volume of regional trade, on the types of goods traded, on exchanges between areas, despite geographers’ research studies.

Regional trade operators, whatever their size, have denounced legal and illicit barriers that hinder free circulation (“illegal tolls”). They have appealed to States to apply the law.

Cross-border cooperation is booming all over West Africa. It is fuelled by shared cultural and linguistic factors (in the Hausa region, in the Fulani area) as well as by demand for shared services (health) or the rationalisation of trade (cross-border markets and fairs, “spontaneous” free zones).

## Major regional projects.....

Participants highlighted the structuring effect of major infrastructure projects initiated on the regional level, especially in terms of energy and transportation.

The Organisme de mise en valeur du Fleuve Sénégal (OMVS) provides a prime example of negotiated sharing of rural hydraulic resources (kilowatt quotas, layout of lines).

The region has made good headway in telecommunications but consumer costs remain a constraint.

The regional road network is in construction and responds to strong demand from economic operators. This demand could stimulate interest for railways. The regional air network, on the other hand, needs to be built from scratch.

Public and private international aid plays an effective integrating role in these sectors as engineers' technical requirements and the financial conditions set by investors override national and political distinctiveness.

In the absence of an African forecasting and coordinating leadership, each sector creates a regional hub or organisation supported by external aid.

## Institutional progress and inadequacies.....

Participants analysed the profusion of regional institutions and the lack of organisations in key sectors for regional integration which are often too bureaucratic, with the risk of discrediting the integration goal.

*Does this not indicate that the States are reluctant to support integration fully?*

Moreover, external aid seems to be the main factor influencing whether these institutions decline or maintain their action.

## Economic aspects

A solid institutional base for integration is appearing: monetary union. Herein lies the strength of the WAEMU, which has laid down the rules, exchange and control mechanisms and the initial corpus of company law. Yet, to date, the ECOWAS zone includes eight currencies (and the unification process has once more been deferred).

The lack of a reliable and efficient regional banking system is a major disadvantage in the regional economic development process.

- The flow of capital between States in the franc zone and others is random. There is no reliable interbank system allowing transfers with Nigeria.
- Likewise, it is difficult to promote the investment of African capital in the region (it is drawn towards tax havens) and to attract diaspora capital to this area without a guaranteed interbank system.

- Failure of the banking system – apart from agricultural banks and financing mechanisms aimed at the rural sector – is often due to State intervention. Banks could find that their viability lies on the sub-regional level.
- Respect for corporate law whereby States would have to enforce rules should be controlled by a strong regional institution.

Participants discussed the lack of African traders in major raw materials. The region does not have its own raw materials commodity exchange.

There is no African contribution in the drawing up of international standards.

Exports outside the region go to Europe and, more recently, to the Americas and Asia because there is no regional market.

Consumer goods, which could be produced regionally, are imported. Regional companies with a network of subsidiaries could be created if the free circulation of goods and the establishment of rights were guaranteed.

African analysts do not discuss the ways and means to invest a proportion of oil revenue into regional development.

## **Cultural aspects**

Participants, especially the first independence generation, analysed the disappearance of regional knowledge and research centres whereas there used to be regional cooperation in these fields.

Neither the media nor educational institutions teach regional solidarity as part of a civic education programme.

Questions were raised on the resurgence of a regional pan-African identity and solidarity which fuelled the fight for independence.

Spokespersons for young people and women focused on the issues of “supranationality” whereby States would be forced to guarantee access to education and human rights.

The analysis of these shortcomings led participants to transfer very strong demands onto ECOWAS.

### **Institutional aspects**

During the discussions, the complementarities between different regional and continental institutions (ECOWAS, the African Union, the WAEMU, the CILSS, NEPAD and development partners) was noted.

## **4. ECOWAS and progress made in regional integration**

Very strong demands were expressed to ECOWAS representatives and the SWAC Secretariat. These issues were raised as an appeal rather than an accusation.

### **ECOWAS' missions and mandates.....**

Participants first reviewed the history of the institution.

Initially created to act in the economic field and steer through the construction of a trading area, over the past fifteen years, it has had to act in the realm of peace-keeping and collective security, then in the specifically political area of democratic processes, pushed and aided by the former colonial powers.

It has therefore become an "operator" for the UN, which has certain repercussions for its relations with the African Union. The Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security, followed by the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the Rights of Citizens (1999 and 2001 respectively), have been added to the Founding Treaty. Today, ECOWAS is better known for its political missions than for its original mandate.

Participants believe that these new missions have been positive, despite their difficulty.

Participants more committed to regional peace-keeping would like to see the alarm raised by civil society and its efforts to obtain disarmament or fight the military enrolment of children.

Some participants wonder if it would not be better to create an autonomous permanent, financial, logistical, civil and military resources structure to assure these missions.

*Does the ECOWAS Secretariat have the relevant democracy and electoral monitoring resources? Is it independent in crisis situations?*

## Appraisal of the contribution to integration.....

### Successes

Assertion of the right to free circulation and the creation of the ECOWAS passport are unanimously agreed. The States will be held responsible if these rights are violated.

### Inadequacies

The first observation relates to a lack of communication. In general, West African citizens are not aware of the Treaties and Protocols and thus do not refer to them. The media does not inform citizens in this field; these civic education aspects are not taught in schools.

It was suggested that a widely circulated "manual" should be produced and that the national written and radio media should be involved, especially in broadcasting regional news.

At the level of the West African private sector, the Business Forum (ECOWAS-businesses) met during ECOWAS' 30th anniversary. Furthermore, ECOWAS was asked to strengthen its dialogue with civil society actors who are advocates of regional integration.

Regional solidarity movements (human rights, youth organisations, peace movements) are not supported by ECOWAS.

There is no public debate on monetary policy or on relevant convergence criteria.

ECOWAS must develop policies regarding employment notably as regards youth as well as those that deal with the use of new technologies.

ECOWAS does not take part in WTO negotiations (the case of cotton).

*What is the Investment Bank doing? Can it raise funds on the international market? ECOWAS appears to be a club for Heads of State. How is it democratic? What is the role of the Parliament? What are the institution's links with citizens' representatives, politicians or associations?*

## Questions on the Executive Secretariat and its future

- *What are its precise mandates in terms of joint policies?*
- *What qualitative and quantitative human resources does it have?*
- *What budget does it have? Although resource raising mechanisms are known, citizens do not see any benefits in terms of income and employment.*
- *Does it really have the necessary authority to demand that States comply with the protocols?*
- *Who represents it within each State? It was suggested that real autonomous offices (or delegations) replace the current correspondent units which form part of national ministries.*
- *Which institutional changes could be made to meet various civic actors' demand for integration, their will to be better informed and gain access to regional institutions which they could democratise?*

## Some answers

- The high expectations expressed by these issues and debates go beyond the answers that Secretariat representatives taking part in the seminar were able to offer.
- Secretariat representatives provided considerable information and explanations in the work sessions.
- It was clear that both the call for strong leadership to give new momentum to the institution and the call for a supranational authority lie within the competence of the Heads of State.
- All participants expressed their support for the integration process and their need for public debate on current and future issues involving West African construction.

## 5. The region's future and prospects in the global context

The future of the region and its prospects in a context of growing globalisation in all its forms (world market and deregulation, communications, technology and knowledge) were discussed at the end of the seminar during a question and answer session. Participants also suggested the creation of a regional coalition.

### Questions raised during debates on the future of West Africa.....

- *Which agricultural changes would ensure the future of the farming world?*
- *Which economic changes would meet the employment requirements of a population of which 55% is under twenty?*
- *Which guarantees does the private sector need so that it may absorb a good share of this production force?*
- *Which committed policies will allow the re-composition of the regional space and regional development to the benefit of inevitably mobile populations?*
- *Which social policies could moderate mass impoverishment?  
How could African capacity for analysis and expertise be restored?*

### Towards a regional coalition.....

The participants called for the establishment of a proper regional coalition beyond the addition of ECOWAS Member States.

- *Could this coalition resist outside intervention which, through international aid, imposes its own development models on the States and "forgets" regional intervention?*
- *Could it control direct foreign investments in order to reconcile their interests and those of regional development fairly?*
- *Would this coalition be united enough to diversify international partnerships and position itself against the global ambitions of the most dynamic emerging countries with respect to the African coalition?*

- *Would this coalition find leaders capable of steering through a new “shared utopia”, a vision of the future that gives hope to societies excluded by globalisation?*

This symposium has shown how citizens from very different professional and social backgrounds, of all nationalities, ages and genders can share knowledge of their societies, outline a joint vision and express messages of hope and expectations.

Demand for integration expressed in this way goes beyond economic development and political regional security approaches.

It is an appeal for a West African union capable of establishing democracy, preventing violent conflicts but also making the region a serious player in the global arena.

Through its democratic weight in particular, West Africa could in the future play a more important role at the global level, but this advantage needs to be bolstered by the development of its political solidarities and the enhancement of its economic potential.

## IV. Strategic issues for the region's future

This section discusses the strategic medium and long-term issues for the region as identified by panel members. These are divided into four headings.

1. Building peace and democracy \_\_\_\_\_ 65
2. Dynamic populations and societies \_\_\_\_\_ 66
3. Creation of a regional economic area \_\_\_\_\_ 68
4. ECOWAS and progress in regional integration \_\_\_\_\_ 70



# 1. Building peace and democracy

The effects of fifteen years of conflict in this region have sparked debate on the importance of building democracies. This in turn has led to an examination of the ways in which to democratically govern West Africa.

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## Peace and security

- How can peace and security in this region be developed? What regional political tools can West Africa put in place to strengthen peace and security?
- How can the dynamics of crisis and conflict be controlled 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?

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## 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 the appropriate embodiment of West African allegiances?
- 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 engaged in the political process as regards good governance?

## 2. Dynamic populations and societies

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### How might analysis of population dynamics be improved?

Over the last forty years, all ECOWAS countries have seen huge 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 exercised fully throughout the region.

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### 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, motivators of microfinance projects, agricultural producers, elected officials and members of civil society, are fundamental to the dynamics of development. However, the profile of women in political life is still relatively minor. 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?

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### What effects are new social forces having?

During the 1990s, the priority given to the promotion of democracy opened up new perspectives and formed a stronger civil society, the creation of an independent private press and the proliferation of political parties in West Africa. Faced with unstable governments, civil society organised themselves into associations, in many cases turning these into replacement public initiatives, particularly in the field of aid for victims of conflict or natural disasters. Indeed, decentralisation was perceived as a factor of significant social change.

- What role do these new social forces play in West African society? What are the roles and responsibilities of individual actors in building democracy?
- How can their role in society be strengthened?
- How can the process of decentralisation be encouraged in a way which recognises community initiatives while building local citizenship?
- How can traditional regulation of the community (membership of neighbourhood groups or associations) be made compatible with communal administration?
- How can the new democratic power emerging from these civil society organisations be encouraged?

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### What is the future for West Africa's young people?

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 less than 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 not sufficient and can result in some

undesirable consequences: prostitution, child trafficking, piracy, forced exile, etc. Moreover, this increasingly youthful population is making social and civil demands to which society must listen:

- In which social projects would it be suitable to engage young people in West Africa and what hopes of a better future can we give them?
- 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?

### 3. Creation of a regional economic area

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

Agricultural 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 worried 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 deal with this situation 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?
- Is there a 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 politicians participate in the implementation of a CAP in the context of competition within the region?
- How can we ensure equal access to agricultural biotechnology in the future?

## 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 contributors to the global economy. This applies particularly 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 so that it increases competitiveness both 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 mechanisms of development aide 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?

## 4. ECOWAS and progress in regional integration

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### How can the process of region-building be enhanced?

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 exchange and circulation of goods and people are still in existence, principally because individual nations lack the will to implement the agreements which they signed up to.

- How can we encourage the process of region-building? What additional role can local (public and private), national and regional institutions play in region-building?
- How can the region's public assets be developed? 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 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. A major risk for this regional organisation would be for it to attach too much significance to issues of security and peace to the neglect of questions of economic integration. Another potential pitfall, however, given ECOWAS' numerous responsibilities in so many areas, would be an inability to act effectively in the areas it has prioritised.

- 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 assume its mandates?
- 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' engagement with their regional institutions be improved?

## How should regional citizenship be encouraged?

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?



## V. Follow-up to the Symposium

- Following this symposium, ECOWAS will submit this document to its decision-making authorities, and notably to its Heads of State at their annual Summit, for their appreciation and action, where feasible.
- As from 2006, ECOWAS and SWAC will jointly produce an Annual Report on West Africa and the medium and long-term development perspectives of the region. Some priority themes could be examined each year. Some open-ended thematic issues which could be given particular attention in 2006: medium and long-term stakes of food security for the region; youth migratory movements, youth unemployment and the role of private sector, formal and informal; and the role of different development actors, as a priority women, in particular, etc. This Report would enable a grouping together of key results of regional analyses, consultations, debates, publications and decision on the desirable and possible futures for the region.
- As from 2006, the Panel - whose future role remains to be defined according to the different themes to be addressed - should be able to continue to meet annually in order to review issues on the evolution of ECOWAS and the region as well as the broader issues retained throughout the year.
- In partnership with ECOWAS, the SWAC will provide its support to the undertaking of thematic complementary studies, in network with concerned structures. Other competent authorities, inside or outside the region, will also be consulted.
- Although this strategic thinking process will be carried out over a certain number of years, immediate action proposals should emerge responding to the expectations of the region's populations.



# Annex 1 - List of participants

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## Panel of independent personalities

### Mr. Demba BALDE,

Movement of young people for peace and integration, Casamance, Senegal

### Mrs. Shade BEMBATOUM-YOUNG,

Consultant (trade, investments, regional integration), Nigeria

### Mr. Mamadou CISSOKHO,

Leader, Regional Farmer Organisation

### Mr. Mamadou Igor DIARRA,

Banker, Mali

### Mr. Massaër DIALLO

Political analyst

### Mr. Pape Nalla FALL,

Employers' Organisation Representative, Senegal

### Mrs. Saran Daraba KABA,

Regional Civil Society Leader, Guinea

### Mrs. Thérèse KEITA,

Sociologist, Niger

### Mrs. Jane KWAWU,

Consultant (Gender), Ghana

### Mr. Dieudonné OUEDRAOGO,

Demographer, University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

### Mr. Rasmane OUEDRAOGO,

Banker and Financial Expert (working in Nairobi), Burkina Faso

### Mrs. Regina Sia SAFFA,

University lecturer and OSC, Sierra Leone

### Mrs. Juliette SOW,

Legal Expert, Senegal

### Mr. Seydina Oumar SY,

Diplomat, Senegal

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## ECOWAS National correspondents

### Mrs. Claire ADONON,

Benin

### Mrs. Irene MAAMAH,

Ghana

### Mr. Hassane HAMANI,

Niger

### Mr. Sory KAMISSOKO,

Mali

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## ECOWAS Secretariat

### Dr. Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS,

Executive Secretary

### Dr. Adrienne DIOP,

Communications Director

### Mr. Franck OFEI,

Director of economic policies

### Mr. Christian TAUPIAC,

Advisor to the Executive Secretary

### Mr. Baber H. TANDINA,

Mobilisation of resources

### Mr. Gideon GBAPPY,

Macroeconomics

### Mr. Anekwe OGOCHUKWU,

Economic policies

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## West African Monitoring Institute

### Mr. Sidiqé SESAY,

Director, Finance and Administration

### Mr. R.D. ASANTE,

Technical consultant

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## Sahel and West African Club Secretariat (SWAC)

### Mrs. Thérèse PUJOLLE,

President

### Mr. Normand LAUZON,

Director

### Mrs. Sunhilt SCHUMACHER,

Deputy Director

**Mr. Laurent BOSSARD,**

Head of the Local Development and Regional  
Integration Unit

**Mr. Massaër DIALLO,**

Head of Governance and Conflict Unit

**Ms. Sara MINARD,**

Socio-economist, Medium- and long-term  
development perspectives Unit

**Mr. Christophe PERRET,**

Macroeconomist, Medium- and long-term  
development perspectives Unit

**Dr. Dominique BANGOURA,**

Consultant

# Annex 2 - Symposium Agenda

25 and 26 May 2005  
ECOWAS' Executive Secretariat  
Abuja, Nigeria

## Wednesday 25 May

- 9.00 – 10.00      Arrival of Participants
- 10.00 – 10.30      OPENING SESSION
- Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, ECOWAS Executive Secretary  
Welcome Statement: Evolution of the ECOWAS Mandate
- Mrs. Thérèse Pujolle, President, SWAC  
Welcome Statement: The ECOWAS/SWAC Partnership
- 10.30 – 10.50      PRESENTATION OF THE WORK OF THE PANELS
- Dr. Adrienne Diop, Director of Communication, ECOWAS  
Presentation of the Panel on Institutional Integration in West Africa  
and the role of ECOWAS
- Mr. Normand Lauzon, Director of the SWAC Secretariat  
Presentation of the Panel on Medium and Long-term  
Development Perspectives in West Africa, and the role of ECOWAS
- 10.50 – 11.30      PLENARY SESSION
- Presentation of Reference Documents and Materials
- Mr. Frank Ofei, Director of Economic Policy, ECOWAS  
Presentation of the Evolution of Regional Integration and ECOWAS
- Dr. Dominique Bangoura, SWAC Consultant  
Presentation of the Summary Report on the Studies:  
West African Past Performance and Prospects
- Mr. Laurent Bossard, Head, Regional Integration and  
Development Unit, SWAC Secretariat  
Presentation of Atlas of Transport and Telecommunications  
in ECOWAS Region

11.30 – 13.30

PRESENTATION BY PANEL MEMBERS

Position in the society and fields of operation  
Perception of the evolution of the region and of the regional institutions

15.00 – 18.30

BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

Panel 1: Regional integration and evolution of the ECOWAS  
Role and Mandate  
Review of the evolution of institutional building in West Africa

Panel 2: Development perspectives of the region and the evolution of the ECOWAS role  
Each Panelist's assessment and perception of the evolution of the region: retrospective assessment of the dynamics of change and identification of adverse factors.

**Thursday 26 May**

9.30 – 17.30

PLENARY SESSION

Presentation of conclusions of the two panels  
Integration and Development perspectives of the region and the evolution of the role of ECOWAS

17.30 – 18.30

SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

# Population in West Africa 1960 and projection 2020

