

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA**

17TH MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

3 and 4 March 2014, Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire

Outcomes and Recommendations

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 17th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) of the Economic Commission for Africa Sub regional Office for West Africa (ECA/SRO-WA) was held on 3 and 4 March 2014 in Yamoussoukro, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, with logistical and financial support from the Government. Experts from member States and representatives of West African intergovernmental organizations met to discuss economic and social development issues in the sub region. They also shared experiences in their coping strategies for growth and development challenges. The meeting theme, "Industrialization of the Agricultural Sector for a Food Secure West Africa" reflects the concern to focus on the pressing need to develop the sub region's huge agricultural, mining and energy potential to ensure fast growth and harmonious development, in line with the ECOWAS Vision 2020. The overall development strategy of the sub region must factor in the untapped potential, so as to create added value along the entire value chain of natural resources. Exploiting these vast agricultural resources will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), strengthening socioeconomic development and accelerating progress to meet the aspirations of the ECOWAS Vision 2020.

2. The 17th ICE meeting is intended to help ECOWAS member States and other West African stakeholders to review the economic and social developments of the subregion and share experiences, in an effort to address growth and development issues. One major hurdle faced by these countries is using industrialization to drive structural transformation. The choice of theme stems from the ECA 2013 Economic Report for Africa entitled "Making the Most of Africa's Commodities: Industrializing for Growth, Jobs and Economic Transformation", which recommends strengthening the role of the industrial sector as an engine of development.

Participation

3. Experts from the following member States attended the meeting: Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The following institutions were also represented: The ECOWAS Commission, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Statistical and Economic Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA), the National School of Statistics and applied Economics (ENSEA) and the Regional Consular Chamber of UEMOA (CCR-UEMOA). The civil society and the media were also represented.

Opening Ceremony

4. Three statements were made at the ceremony by: (a) Mr. Dimitri Sanga, Director of ECA/SRO-WA; (b) Mr. Anatole Tohougbe, outgoing Chairman of the 16th ICE; and (c) Mr. André Assoumou Ekponon, Prefect of the Belier region, representing Mr. Albert Toikeusse Mabri, Minister of State and Minister of Planning and Development.

5. Mr. Guillaume Gnamien N'Dri, Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Industry and Mines, representing the Minister, delivered the keynote address on “Industrialization for a Food Secure West Africa”.

Election of Bureau

6. By acclamation, the meeting elected its Bureau as follows:

Chair:	Côte d'Ivoire
First Vice-chair:	Nigeria
Rapporteur:	Niger

Adoption of agenda

7. The experts from the member States adopted the agenda put forward.

II. PRESENTATIONS

Progress report on implementation of regional and international agendas – MDG 7

8. The secretariat presented a status report on the MDGs and regional and international agendas, focusing on sustainable development (MDG 7).

Report on economic and social conditions in West Africa

9. Notwithstanding the difficult global economic context, the sub region continued to enjoy robust growth. While growth was burgeoning in the sub region's countries but had slowed down in the emerging and developing ones, Africa as a whole still managed to register positive growth figures.

Report on the theme of the meeting: “Industrialization of the Agricultural Sector for a Food Secure West Africa”

10. While West Africa's agriculture sector was crucial to employment and growth and had a huge potential for production, it remained largely under-tapped and could not ensure the much needed food security sought by countries. Furthermore, the sector was struggling in its quest to modernize and industrialize, although it employed over 60 per cent of the working population.

New ECA initiatives

11. The secretariat informed participants that ECA had devised new strategies in specific areas such as capacity building, partnerships and knowledge management.

Report on the implementation of the ECA/SRO-WA work programme

12. The Secretariat presented the Office's activity report for the February 2013-February 2014 period. They reviewed activities carried out by the Office, including meetings, workshops, seminars, publications and advisory services.

13. A side event was organized on the challenges of measuring development efforts in Africa. The round table was animated jointly by the Director of INSE Abidjan and the Director of the Polytechnic Institute of Yamoussoukro. This session which generated a lot of interest from the audience benefited from the active participation of 39 students in Statistics and

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Report on the implementation of regional and international agendas - MDG 7

R1. As part of the Rio+20 consultations, specifically, the sustainable development goals, held in Addis Ababa, a study was conducted on the contribution of the West Africa subregion. The workshop recommended broad distribution of the study in the countries of the subregion to ensure better ownership of its content.

R2. Given the high cost of sanitation infrastructures, hardly sustainable by the decentralized local authorities and the inadequate resources allocated by the technical and financial partners, participants recommend that Governments and technical and financial partners should mobilize the requisite resources to fund these infrastructures.

3.2. Report on the economic and social conditions in West Africa and prospects for 2014

R3. To guarantee sustainable growth in the subregion there is a need to maintain a viable macroeconomic environment, devise an effective debt strategy and build capacities to contain inflation.

R4. To maintain the growth momentum, it is recommended that ECOWAS countries further diversify their investment financing sources, especially by promoting public-private partnership with a view to maintaining the pace of laying long-term foundations for growth (infrastructure and human capital).

R5. Member States must adopt a more active multilateral surveillance that will assign a role to ECOWAS through WAMA, by enacting finance laws and monitoring the execution of public finances.

R6. To promote employment, countries are hereby reminded of the high employment potential of the green economy in the natural resource-based sectors such as agriculture, forestry, mining, fishery resources, renewable energy, water management, as well as other sectors such as transportation and waste management. Youth and women employment generating sectors may therefore explore these sectors.

R7. The ECOWAS and UEMOA commissions are also encouraged to further popularize the integration laws adopted, especially those on the implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET) to ensure better ownership by stakeholders such as the private sector, society and media professionals.

3.3. Report on “Industrialization of the Agricultural Sector for a Food Secure West Africa”

Member States are called upon to:

R8. Select strategic local products and adopt models of industrialization to develop their value chains, from production to processing and marketing.

R9. Enhance mechanisms for promoting the agricultural sector and research-development institutions.

R10. Develop and/or strengthen the framework for incentives by ensuring protection for investors in an effort to promote national, regional and international resource mobilization for setting up agri-business enterprises, preferably based on the agricultural co-entrepreneurship model against the backdrop of sustainable development.

R11. Promote partnerships and strategic alliances at all levels within and outside West Africa in an effort to promote public-private partnerships, thereby improving investments in agriculture.

3.4. Report on ECA activities

R12. Member States noted and endorsed the SRO activity report. They requested the inclusion of the outcomes and impact of the Office’s activities on member States in future activity reports.

R13. Member States are invited to strengthen their statistical system so as to produce quality and updated data.