

March

2017



FINAL REPORT

ECOWAS International Workshop on Ten years of
Electoral Experiences and Promotion of Democracy &
2017 Biennial General Assembly Meeting of the
ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ten years after the creation of the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) within the Political Affairs Directorate of the ECOWAS Commission, there was a need to review its activities within the context of the evolving electoral environment in the West African region with the aim of assessing the challenges and lessons learned. Thus, the ECOWAS Commission, in partnership with the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) held an International Conference in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, from 27 – 28 March 2017 on the theme “A Decade of ECOWAS Experiences and Promotion of Democracy: Challenges and Lessons Learned”. At the end of the Conference, it was resolved, among other things that the ECOWAS Commission and Member States should:

- Prioritize the production of reliable, up-to-date, and credible register of voters that is acceptable to all electoral stakeholders;
- Strengthen capacity development and training of electoral officials to promote efficiency, effectiveness and performance in the delivery of free, fair, credible, transparent and peaceful elections;
- Recognize the positive contribution of National Peace Councils, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith and Community Based Organisations (FBOs/CBOs), Media, including social media, Traditional Rulers, Religious leaders in promoting violence-free elections;
- Accelerate the establishment and activation of the regional logistics depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone and encourage the pooling election resources and materials for common use across the ECOWAS region;
- See elections as a sovereign matter in respect to the electoral environment, resource mobilisation, efficient and optimal deployment of resources, as well as the standardisation and timely adoption of constitutional and legal electoral frameworks;
- View the application of technological innovations in the electoral process as a facilitator, rather than a “cure all” panacea for delivery of good and credible elections;
- Enhance their support for Political parties through regular trainings and workshops to strengthen their capacity to manage diversity and to promote participation, internal party democracy, accountability and transparency in party

and campaign financing and alternate dispute resolution through the Intra/Inter Party Advisory Councils, and;

- Assist ECOWAS Member States to expedite action on the implementation and amendment of existing instruments, as well as the enactment of emerging normative frameworks to promote political inclusivity, women and youth empowerment, as well as access of women, youth and People Living with Disabilities to full participation and representation the in political process.

The 2017 Biennial General Assembly Meeting of ECONEC held on 29 March 2017 in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, on the margins of the ECOWAS International Workshop International Workshop on ten years of Electoral Experiences in West Africa. All ECONEC members were present at the meeting with the exception of EC Ghana. The main point on the agenda was the election of a new Board. The election gave way for the emergence of a new Steering Committee comprised of: INEC Nigeria (President), CENA Benin (1st Vice-President), CNE Guinea Bissau (2nd Vice-President), CENI Burkina Faso (Treasurer), and CNE Cabo Verde (Deputy Treasurer). After careful deliberation of the issues raised during the meeting, the gathering arrived at the following decisions:

- The revised Action Plan in English should be translated into the two other official languages – French and Portuguese – and circulated to all members;
- Each ECONEC member should designate a Focal Person to liaise with the ECONEC Secretariat and boost internal communication among Network members;
- The ECONEC Board should embark on a review of the ECONEC Statutes and present its work for adoption at the next meeting;
- The 6th Biennial General Assembly will hold in Nigeria in 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

From 27 – 28 March 2017, the ECOWAS Commission, in partnership with the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) held an International Conference on the theme “A Decade of ECOWAS Experiences and Promotion of Democracy: Challenges and Lessons Learned” in Cotonou, Republic of Benin. The Conference undertook an objective assessment and analyses of electoral administration, processes, procedures and outcomes within the ECOWAS region in the last decade.

The Conference was attended by Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons, and Members of Electoral Management Bodies, Representatives of ECOWAS and National Parliaments, as well as representatives of the Ministry in charge of Elections in Member States. Also in attendance was the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Head of ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division and Permanent Secretary of ECONEC, as well as Staff of ECOWAS Commission, ECONEC Secretariat and African Union Commission. Other participants included Election Experts and development partners such as International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES), European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and West African Network for Peace building (WANEP). The conference was supported by Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The International Conference was followed by the fifth Biennial General Assembly Meeting of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), which held on 29 March 2017. Following on from the decision by members present during the fourth General Assembly meeting held in July 2015 in Praia, Cabo Verde, to postpone the election of a new Steering Committee due to the complete absence of one of the linguistic areas at that gathering, the main point on the agenda of the 2017 General Assembly in Cotonou was the election of a new Board. Other points on the agenda included the presentation of a progress report by the outgoing Board, review and consideration of the two-year action plan, and presentation of the Concept Note and Methodology for Needs Assessment

Missions (NAMs) jointly developed with the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

The meeting was chaired by the outgoing President, Gen. Siaka Sangare, and had in attendance the Chair- or Vice-Chairpersons of all member Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) excluding the Electoral Commission of Ghana. Other participants included the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Halima Ahmed; the representative of the funding partner, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), Mr. Mathias Hounkpe; the Head of the Electoral Assistance Division of ECOWAS and Permanent Secretary of ECONEC, Mr. Francis Gabriel Oke; a representative of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), Ms. Olufunto Akinduro; and the newly hired staff of the Permanent Secretariat of ECONEC.

CONDUCT AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

During the opening ceremony of the International Conference, the Chairperson of the electoral commission of Benin, Mr. Emmanuel Tiando, and host of the event heartily welcomed participants and expressed the sincere appreciation for the choice of Benin to host such an important event. He further pointed out the pertinence of the issues to be discussed for the future of electoral administration in West Africa. Other speakers, including the Acting President of ECONEC, Gen. Siaka Sangare; the German Ambassador to the Republic of Benin, H.E. Walter Von den Driesch; the representative of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, Mr. Mathias Hounkpe; and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Marcel A. de Souza; took turns to highlight the importance and timeliness of the gathering and to call for sincere, honest, and fruitful deliberations.

After the opening ceremony, the conference proceeded with panel presentations followed by plenary discussions on various topical issues. The discussions led participants to acknowledge the evolving democratic culture of regular and largely credible elections within the ECOWAS region and to salute the courage, determination and resilience of the citizenry and various national institutions in the region in promoting and defending democracy.

Thus, following exhaustive deliberations, the gathering to adopt the following resolutions:

1. ECOWAS Member States that are yet to ratify the Principles contained in the Supplementary, and in the Revised Protocols on Democracy and Good Governance should ratify, domesticate and ensure the enforcement of the normative norms in these Protocols in order to enhance peaceful elections and democratic culture. Attention should be given to the respect of the principle of “two-term limit” for Presidents and Heads of State;
2. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should prioritize the production of reliable, up-to-date and credible register of voters that is acceptable to all electoral stakeholders, taking into consideration the opportunities offered by technological innovations and the challenges of infrastructural deficits;

3. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should strengthen capacity development and training of electoral officials to promote efficiency, effectiveness and performance in the delivery of free, fair, credible, transparent and peaceful elections;
4. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should recognize the positive contribution of National Peace Councils, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith and Community Based Organisations (FBOs/CBOs), Media, including social media, Traditional Rulers, Religious leaders in promoting violence-free elections. EMBs should constructively engage with relevant stakeholders, in a timely and transparent manner, to disseminate information on organizational and operational processes to enhance confidence and trust in the electoral process;
5. ECOWAS Commission should accelerate the establishment and activation of the regional logistics depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone and encourage the pooling election resources and materials for common use across the ECOWAS region, based on the principle of mutual assistance and burden sharing;
6. ECOWAS Member States should see elections as a sovereign matter in respect to the electoral environment, resource mobilisation, efficient and optimal deployment of resources, as well as the standardisation and timely adoption of constitutional and legal electoral frameworks;
7. ECOWAS Member States should view the application of technological innovations in the electoral process as a facilitator, rather than a “cure all” panacea for delivery of good and credible elections. The deployment of such technological equipment and applications should be secured in law, protected against intrusion and accompanied by appropriate training of electoral officials and effective civic and voter education to engender trust, confidence and ownership by all stakeholders;
8. ECOWAS Commission and Electoral Management Bodies in ECOWAS Member States should enhance their support for Political parties through regular trainings and workshops to strengthen their capacity to manage diversity and to promote participation, internal party democracy, accountability and transparency in party and campaign

financing and alternate dispute resolution through the Intra/Inter Party Advisory Councils;

9. ECOWAS Commission should assist ECOWAS Member States to expedite action on the implementation and amendment of existing instruments, as well as the enactment of emerging normative frameworks to promote political inclusivity, women and youth empowerment, as well as access of women, youth and People Living with Disabilities to full participation and representation the in political process.

PRESENTATION OF THE ECONEC PROGRESS REPORT

In his presentation, the outgoing President began by thanking OSIWA for its immense and continuous support to ECONEC. He then went ahead to enumerate some of the difficulties the Network faced operating from Freetown during the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa. The outgoing President also explained the reason for the postponement of the 5th General Assembly meeting in 2015, pointing out that it was due to a lack of quorum.

He also explained that financial constraints hindered ECONEC operations during his tenure, with only OSIWA providing all the funding since inception of the Network. He informed the gathering that the US\$ 900,000 (Nine hundred thousand Dollars) support pledged by the former leadership of the ECOWAS Commission had not been redeemed, and added that the outgoing Board had met with the new ECOWAS President in Cotonou to renew talks on the redemption of the pledge. In her response, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security reassured ECONEC members about the ECOWAS Commission's willingness to assist the Network based on the availability of funds, explaining that the Commission was also facing financial challenges of its own.

With respect to the Network's visibility and brand identity, the outgoing President noted that a logo had been created for ECONEC while the Electoral Commission of Guinea had assisted with the creation of a website, although it is currently offline. He concluded by stressing the need for member States to live up to their responsibility and commitment towards effective functioning of the Network. He also called for the deepening of solidarity and the spirit of cooperation among ECONEC members, citing the example of INEC Nigeria, and others, which he said had provided assistance to other ECONEC members.

In their interventions, INEC Nigeria, CENI Guinea, CNE Cabo Verde, CENA Benin, and NEC Sierra Leone, agreed on the need for members to pay their annual dues as part of efforts to address the funding challenge. When the issue about application of sanctions against defaulting members was raised, the meeting was informed that the method for the assessment of the annual dues had not been decided. Consequently, it was unanimously agreed that the incoming Board should take up the task of fixing the rate of the annual

dues. It was also agreed that for ECONEC to be professional and effective it must address the issue of funding by expanding the scope of its funds mobilisation and members living up to their financial obligations and responsibilities.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The gathering agreed that beginning from the next meeting, a Financial Report should always feature during the Network's General Assembly.

ELECTION OF NEW ECONEC BOARD

Before proceeding with the election of a new Board, the gathering paid tribute to the outgoing team, led by Gen. Sangare, for their sacrifices, contribution and service despite difficult financial conditions.

Members took time to carefully examine the relevant Articles of the ECONEC Statutes to guide them in the conduct of the elections. A point was raised on Article 18.2 on the composition of the board, but it was agreed that the election should go ahead while efforts should be made to rectify whatever anomaly was observed. Consequently, on the request of a member State and in accordance with Article 17.6.3 of the Statutes, it was agreed that secret balloting should be adopted.

President

Three candidates declared their interest to vie for the position of President of ECONEC, as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------|
| 1. Mr. Bakary Fofana | - | CENI Guinea |
| 2. Mr. Emmanuel Tiando | - | CENA Benin |
| 3. Prof. Mahmood Yakubu | - | INEC Nigeria |

In the West African spirit of consensus, the meeting requested that Gen. Sangare (DGE Mali) and Dr. Maria Goncalves (CNE Cabo Verde) should facilitate a discussion between the three candidates to arrive at a consensus failure of which will then lead to a decision by secret ballot. Following this intervention, CENA Benin agreed to stand down, leaving

the contest between INEC Nigeria and CENI Guinea. Following a single round of voting, INEC Nigeria emerged victorious, having garnered 10 votes against 4 for CENI Guinea.

Other positions

For the position of 1st Vice-President, CENA Benin expressed its interest to vie while CNE Cabo Verde pointed out that it was only interested in the position if members will unanimously support its candidacy. Considering the CENA Benin had already indicated its interest, CNE Cabo Verde decided to stand down, giving way for CENA Benin to vie unopposed.

Following on from this, the other positions were then filled by popular acclamation as follows:

- 2nd Vice-President - **Mr. Jose Pedro Sambu** (CNE Guinea Bissau)
- Treasurer - **Mr. Ahmed Barry** (CENI Burkina Faso)
- Deputy Treasurer - **Dr. Maria do Rosario Goncalves** (CNE Cabo Verde)

After the successful election, the outgoing President formally handed over the meeting's proceedings to the newly elected Board President, who thanked his colleagues for their support and confidence in him. The new President pledged his commitment to reposition ECONEC and make it effective, efficient and ensure sustainability of its activities.

ECONEC TWO-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Permanent Secretary of ECONEC led members in reviewing the Two-year Action Plan, pointing out what had been done and what was yet to be done. He then presented the newly recruited staff of the Secretariat to ECONEC members, as follows:

- Programme Officer - **Ms. Arlinda Chantre**
- Finance/Admin Officer - **Mr. Chinedu Chinedu**
- Communication/Advocacy Officer - **Mr. Paul Ejime**

CONCEPT NOTE & METHODOLOGY FOR NAMs & FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

After the closed-door session for the ECONEC Elections, the EISA Representative made a presentation to the open session on the need for ECONEC to take up the deployment of Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs) to its members preparing to hold elections and also to ensure follow-up of implementation of recommendations of ECOWAS Election Observation Missions to ascertain steps that are being taken to apply remedial actions.

The NAMs will provide an opportunity for engagement/interaction with relevant stakeholders including EMBs, Judiciary, Security, Political Parties, CSOs and development partners/donors to determine areas of need that should be properly addressed at different stages of the electoral cycle.

The meeting welcomed the EISA support and agreed that EISA, the ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) and the ECONEC Secretariat should continue consultations to finalise the implementation of the NAMs support.

DECISIONS

Following from discussions on the various issues, members arrived at the following decisions:

- The revised Action Plan in English should be translated into the two other official languages – French and Portuguese – and circulated to all members;
- Each ECONEC member should designate a Focal Person to liaise with the ECONEC Secretariat and boost internal communication among Network members;
- The ECONEC Board should embark on a review of the ECONEC Statutes and present its work for adoption at the next meeting;
- The 6th Biennial General Assembly will hold in Nigeria in 2019.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the deliberations, the newly elected President urged members to renew their commitment to ECONEC through sustained communication, solidarity and collaboration towards the realisation of the ECOWAS objective of regional integration and the

Network's mandate of promoting credible and transparent elections for the deepening of democracy and good governance in the region.

ANNEXE 1: Agenda of the International Workshop



A DECADE OF ECOWAS ELECTORAL EXPERIENCES AND PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

27 - 29 March 2017

Cotonou, Republic of Benin

AGENDA

Activity	Time	Responsibility
DAY 1		
Arrival and Registration	8:30 - 9:00	ECOWAS
Welcome Statement	9:00 - 9:10	Mr. Emmanuel Tiando (Chairman of CENA Benin)
Goodwill Message	9:10 - 9:20	Gen. Siaka Sangare (Acting President of ECONEC)
Goodwill Message	9:20 - 9:30	H.E. Walter Von den Driesch (German Ambassador to Benin)
Goodwill Message	9:30 - 9:40	Mr. Mathias Hounkpe (OSIWA)
Keynote address	9:40 - 9:50	H.E. Marcel A. de Souza (President of ECOWAS Commission)
Tea Break	10:00 - 10:15	
Plenary Session 1: Domesticating ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance	10:15 - 11:30	Moderator: H.E. Halima Ahmed Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Mr. Eyesan Okorodudu– Mr. Mathias Hounkpe
Plenary Session 2: The challenges of voter and civic registration systems and opportunities for a credible voters' register	11:30 - 12:45	Moderator: Prof. Mahmood Yakubu Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ms. Levinia Addae-Mensah– Gen. Siaka Sangare
Lunch Break	12:45 - 13:45	
Plenary Session 3: Human resource capacity development and training for effective electoral performance	13:45 - 15:00	Moderator: Mr. Emmanuel Tiando Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Prof. Abu Momoh– Me. Barthélémy Kéré

Activity	Time	Responsibility
Plenary Session 4: Stakeholders engagement and deepening the scope, reach, and platforms for voter mobilisation and civic education	15:00 - 16:15	Moderator: Mr. Taffa Tabiou Panelists: – Mr. Francis Laleye – Ms. Miatta French
Welcome Cocktail	18:00	
DAY 2		
Plenary Session 5: Electoral Operations and Logistics Management	9:00 - 10:15	Moderator: Mr. Bertin Ganin N'goran Panelists: – Mr. Mattia Aiah – Mr. Rufin Godjo
Tea Break	10:15 - 10:30	
Plenary Session 6: Technological innovations and the electoral process	10:30 - 11:45	Moderator: Dr. Maria do Rosario Pereira Gonçalves Panelists: – Dr. Mohammad Kuna – Ms. Arlinda Chantre
Plenary Session 7: Resource mobilisation and funding regime for elections: challenges, lessons, and opportunities for EMBs	11:45 - 13:00	Moderator: Mr. Bakary Fofana Panelists: – Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu
Lunch Break	13:00 - 14:00	
Plenary Session 8: Political Parties and democratic consolidation: internal democracy and party campaign financing	14:00 - 15:15	Moderator: Mr. Bakary Fofana Panelists: – Mr. Eyesan Okorodudu – Prof. Adele Jinadu
Plenary Session 9: Promoting inclusivity in the political process: women, youth and PWDs	15:15 - 16:30	Moderator: Ms. Levinia Addae-Mensah Panelists: – Ms. Amie Joof – Mr. Paul Ejime
Plenary Session 10: Summary of deliberations	16:30 - 17:00	Prof. Bolade Eyinla (Rapporteur-en-Chef)
Closing Ceremony and Vote of Thanks	17:00 - 17:30	Mr. Francis Gabriel Oke (Head, Electoral Assistance Division)
DAY 3 (ECONEC General Assembly Meeting)		
Critical analysis of the evolution of the network: causes of the dysfunction and prospects for the future and identifying sustainable sources of income	9:00 - 10:00	Gen. Siaka Sangare
Tea Break	10:00 - 10:15	
Election of New Board	10:15 – 10:45	
Review, Update and Adoption of 2-year Action Plan	10:45 – 11:15	Prof. Mahmood Yakubu

Activity	Time	Responsibility
Presentation of Concept Note and Methodology for ECONEC Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs) and Post-election Recommendation Follow-up Missions	11:15 – 12:00	EISA/ECONEC Secretariat
END OF EVENT		

ANNEXE 2: The Cotonou Declaration on electoral processes in West Africa



THE COTONOU DECLARATION ON ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN ECOWAS REGION

From 27 – 28 March 2017, the ECOWAS Commission, in partnership with the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC) held an International Conference on, *A Decade of ECOWAS Experiences and Promotion of Democracy: Challenges and Lessons Learned*, at the Benin Royal Hotel in Cotonou, Republic of Benin.

The Conference undertook an objective assessment and analyses of electoral administration, processes, procedures and outcomes within the ECOWAS region in the last decade. The Conference was attended by Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons and Members of Electoral Management Bodies, Representatives of ECOWAS and National Parliaments, as well as representatives of the Ministry in charge of Elections of Member States. Also in attendance was the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Head of ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division and Permanent Secretary of ECONEC, as well as Staff of ECOWAS Commission, ECONEC Secretariat and African Union Commission. Other participants include Election Experts and development partners such as International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES), European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and West African Network for Peace building (WANEP). The conference was supported by Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

PARTICIPANTS AT THE CONFERENCE:

ACKNOWLEDGED the evolving democratic culture of regular, periodic and largely credible and non-violent elections in the last decade within the ECOWAS region. In seven of these elections, the ruling party was voted out of power and replaced by the opposition party through mostly peaceful electoral and democratic transition processes;

SALUTE the courage, determination and resilience of the citizenry and various national institutions in the ECOWAS region in promoting and defending democracy and the democratic space to ensure that most of the leaders in the region now obtain their mandate and legitimacy solely through the ballot box;

RECOGNIZED the positive and concerted role of the ECOWAS Commission in facilitating and supporting these largely credible electoral processes and peaceful transitions, thereby deepening democracy and good governance, especially through the systematic deployment of Election Observation Missions in the ECOWAS Member States;

NOTING the progressive adherence of ECOWAS Member States to the 1999 Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security and the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, furthering the enhancement of electoral process and deepening of democratic culture in the ECOWAS region;

TAKING a critical and retrospective look at the ECOWAS electoral assistance and support over the past decade and having reviewed the current state of democracy and democratic governance, peace and security and drawing the appropriate lessons from the these achievements with a view to strengthening current and future elections and consolidating democracy and good governance in the ECOWAS region.

HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. ECOWAS Member States that are yet to ratify the Principles contained in the Supplementary, and in the Revised Protocols on Democracy and Good Governance should ratify, domesticate and ensure the enforcement of the normative norms in these Protocols in order to enhance peaceful elections and democratic culture. Attention should be given to the respect of the principle of “two-term limit” for Presidents and Heads of State;
2. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should prioritize the production of reliable, up-to-date and credible register of voters that is acceptable to all electoral stakeholders, taking into consideration the opportunities offered by technological innovations and the challenges of infrastructural deficits;
3. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should strengthen capacity development and training of electoral officials to promote efficiency, effectiveness and performance in the delivery of free, fair, credible, transparent and peaceful elections;
4. ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States should recognize the positive contribution of National Peace Councils, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith and Community Based Organisations (FBOs/CBOs), Media, including social media, Traditional Rulers, Religious leaders in promoting violence-free elections. EMBs should constructively engage with relevant stakeholders, in a timely and transparent manner, to disseminate information on organizational and operational processes to enhance confidence and trust in the electoral process;
5. ECOWAS Commission should accelerate the establishment and activation of the regional logistics depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone and encourage the pooling election resources and materials for common use across the ECOWAS region, based on the principle of mutual assistance and burden sharing;
6. ECOWAS Member States should see elections as a sovereign matter in respect to the electoral environment, resource mobilisation, efficient and optimal deployment of resources, as well as the standardisation and timely adoption of constitutional and legal electoral frameworks;
7. ECOWAS Member States should view the application of technological innovations in the electoral process as a facilitator, rather than a “cure all” panacea for delivery of good and credible elections. The deployment of such technological equipment and applications should be secured in law, protected against intrusion and

accompanied by appropriate training of electoral officials and effective civic and voter education to engender trust, confidence and ownership by all stakeholders;

8. ECOWAS Commission and Electoral Management Bodies in ECOWAS Member States should enhance their support for Political parties through regular trainings and workshops to strengthen their capacity to manage diversity and to promote participation, internal party democracy, accountability and transparency in party and campaign financing and alternate dispute resolution through the Intra/Inter Party Advisory Councils;
9. ECOWAS Commission should assist ECOWAS Member States to expedite action on the implementation and amendment of existing instruments, as well as the enactment of emerging normative frameworks to promote political inclusivity, women and youth empowerment, as well as access of women, youth and People Living with Disabilities to full participation and representation the in political process.

Done in Cotonou, this 28th Day of March, 2017

ANNEXE 3: ECONEC Action Plan 2017 – 2019



ECONEC 2017 – 2019 Action Plan

No	Problematic	Actions	Expected Outcome	indicative Period	Responsibility	Remarks
Functioning	Strengthening the institutional capacity of ECONEC	Registration of ECONEC with its secretariat geographically established (e.g. in Abuja), adequately equipped and functional.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ECONEC registration certificate is available- An office is setup in one of the Member States with necessary equipment- A bank account is opened	August – September 2015	SC & PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The process of registration has been finalized.- INEC Nigeria has provided office space
		Revamp the supporting staff, e.g. by hiring at least 3 with solid experience: 1 finance person, 1 program person and 1 advocacy and communication person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minutes of meetings held as part of the hiring process are available- At least 2 are hired and contracts signed	January 2017	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Three staff have been recruited- The Finance & Admin Officer and Communication & Advocacy Officer started in January 2017. Program Officer yet to assume duty.

		Ensure internal functioning of ECONEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal communication - Focal person within each EMB - Keep ECONEC informed on any development within each EMB and share any relevant materials - Quarterly report on ECONEC activities - Review of the ECONEC internal regulations - Visibility and external publicity of ECONEC programs and activities 	March 2017 – going forward	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emails will soon be sent out for this purpose. - Steering Committee will review Statute and make recommendations to ECONEC membership
		Ensure ECONEC external relations with key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship with other regional network of EMBs - Relationship with development partners 	March 2017 - 2019	SC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President to undertake extensive consultations to mobilise support from development partners - Explore collaboration with other EMB networks (ECF-SADC, A-WEB, LAS, etc)
Programs	Contribution to the improvement of the legal and institutional frameworks of elections in the region	A study to review legal and institutional framework for elections in the Region and make recommendations for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good practices and challenges are documented - Ways to cope with challenges are proposed - Strategies are designed for the dissemination of best practices 	Some time in 2017	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Findings of the study to be presented and discussed at a forum bringing together ECONEC members

		Translation of lessons learnt into draft legislative and suggestions of institutional reforms, development of advocacy materials and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials for advocacy are developed - Reports of advocacy activities are available 	End of 2017	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The developed materials will be used both at national level (with the support of ECONEC if necessary) and at regional level
	Contribution to solving some specific problems related to the management of electoral processes	<p>Consultant to carry out study on the cost of elections in the Region.</p> <p>A conference to be organized on the cost of conducting elections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best practices in terms of budget control are documented - Study report is published and disseminated - Recommendations of actions are adopted and - Effective implementation monitored by ECONEC 	Some time in 2018	SC / PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is to highlight true facts/ reasons for generally high cost of elections and to find ways and levers on which to act in order to make it more bearable. - ECONEC can take advantage of the annual experience sharing meetings for the collect of practices on this thematic
		Consultant to conduct study on best practices in terms of EMBs' contribution to youth and women participation in electoral processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best practices in terms of youth and women participation are documented - Challenges and ways and strategies to cope with them are identified - Recommendations of actions are adopted and disseminated 	Some time in 2018	SC / PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is to highlight true facts/ reasons for generally high cost of elections and to find ways and levers on which to act in order to make it more bearable. - ECONEC can take advantage of the annual experience sharing meetings for the collect of practices on this topic
		Consultant to conduct study on best practices in terms of relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best practices in terms of EMBs' relations with media and CSOs are documented 		SC / PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -

		between the EMBs and media and CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges and strategies to cope with them are identified - Recommendations of actions are adopted and disseminated 			
		Finalization and dissemination of the Study on the vote of citizens from the diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study on vote of citizens from the diaspora is finalized and published - Dissemination strategy is developed and implemented 	2017	PS	
		Study/Action on impunity in electoral matters and how to cope with it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges and strategies to cope with them are identified - Recommendations of actions are adopted and disseminated 			
		Election security: Security forces' involvement in elections, electoral dispute settlement, election related violence, political parties and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The documentation of practices is finalized - Findings are published and disseminated 		PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first phase of this activity has been implemented with a meeting in Cotonou end of 2013. - The remaining steps need to be thought through
	Improved management of EMBs (ECONEC members)	Communication by EMBs during elections or how to ensure that citizens have access to the right information?	-			-
		The quality of training for polling/election staff: how to avoid the recurring problems of poor training of election staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience sharing between the EMBs. - Best practices in terms of training of electoral duty staff on technological adaptation to improve quality of polls and 		SC / PS	

			deployment of electoral materials. - Training-of-Trainers by TCEs.			
		Study on innovative ways to deal with voters apathy issues	- Challenges and strategies to cope with them are identified - Recommendations of actions are adopted and disseminated		SC / PS	
		Direct support to EMBs	- Needs Assessment missions are conducted in countries preparing elections (Liberia & Sierra Leone) - Specific and adapted supports are identified and provided by ECONEC	June / July 2017	SC / PS	- These will have to do with countries holding elections between 2017 and 2018 - The supports may include purchase of equipment, trainings (BRIDGE), etc.

ANNEXE 4: List of Participants



ECOWAS INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON TEN YEARS OF ELECTORAL EXPERIENCES AND PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA & 2017 BIENNIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING OF THE ECOWAS NETWORK OF ELECTORAL COMMISSIONS (ECONEC)

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ANNEXE 5: ECOWAS Methodology for Cycle-Based Election Assessment: Needs Assessment and Follow-up Missions



1. Background

Election observation is one of several instruments employed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) within the framework of its Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, its Conflict Prevention Framework and the African Union (AU)'s broader normative framework governing the conduct of democratic elections in Africa.

Since 2001, ECOWAS has undertaken election assessment in its Member States through election observation. Its election assessment methodology has evolved since then. The initiative to assess elections in its Member States was taken based on the mandate conferred on the regional body at the adoption of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in the same year. Between 2001 and 2006, ECOWAS deployed Short-Term Observation Missions (STOMs) to observe presidential elections held in the sub-region. Following the establishment of its Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) in 2006, ECOWAS election assessment methodology became more systematic, with the incorporation of pre-election fact-finding missions. Notable improvements in the quality of ECOWAS short-term election assessments were largely attributed to the technical input of the fact-finding missions.

In 2005, ECOWAS along with over 20 other intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DOP). One of the important principles enshrined in the DOP emphasises international election observation as seeking to assess the three phases of the electoral cycle through comprehensive long term engagement with the electoral process. Since 2014, ECOWAS has gone through a gradual shift in its election assessment methodology from a focus on election phase deployment of observers to an electoral cycle-based approach to election assessment. As a result of the shift, ECOWAS has adopted a long-term election methodology to buttress and to complement its short-term election observation initiatives. So far, ten ECOWAS long term election observer missions have been deployed.

Beyond its mandate to conduct technical assessment of elections as an integral part of its wider democratic governance and conflict mitigation mandate, ECOWAS also has a mandate to support electoral processes to promote election integrity and democratic consolidation in its Member States. Its current methodology entails pre-election initiatives such as fact-finding missions that collect first-hand information about the pre-election context. These missions also serve as an early warning tool which enable the sub-regional body to detect risk factors that could impact on the credibility and peaceful conduct of elections. Another component is the deployment of long and short term observers during the election and immediate post-election phase. In terms of its post-election engagement, ECOWAS undertakes post-election reviews that contribute to peer learning and dissemination of good practise in the region.

While the current election assessment methodology spans across the electoral cycle, there remains a gap in the post-election phase. Furthermore, there is a need to bridge the gap between ECOWAS dual mandate of election assessment and electoral assistance which can be achieved through post-election follow-up on recommendations.

Considering the importance that ECOWAS accords to the strengthening of its long-term election assessment methodology, the EAD of ECOWAS requested the support of EISA with the development of its methodology for the conduct of NAMs and follow-up missions. This concept note provides a brief on the methodological issues for ECOWAS to consider before it adopts the NAM and follow-up as part of its election assessment framework. It

also makes proposals on the role EISA intends to play to support the methodology development process of ECOWAS.

2. Rationale for Needs Assessment and Follow-up Missions

Within the framework of its dual mandate of election observation and electoral assistance, there has been more focus on election observation over the years. While the methodology for election observation has to a large extent been developed, there remains a gap in the area of monitoring the implementation of observer recommendations and supporting electoral stakeholders to implement ECOWAS observer recommendations.

Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs) and follow-up missions will provide a platform for ECOWAS to further strengthen its cycle-based election assessment methodology. Furthermore, the NAM and follow-up methodology will contribute to bridging the gap between ECOWAS election observation and electoral assistance mandates.

While fact-finding missions have been a valuable resource for ECOWAS election assessments they have been limited in scope as they focus on assessing the pre-election environment to identify risk factors and define the scope of ECOWAS involvement during the elections. ECOWAS will benefit immensely from the deployment of Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs) which are deployed mid-cycle to ascertain areas of support to inform ECOWAS/ECONEC electoral assistance initiatives in the host country. These NAMs will enable ECOWAS to strengthen its electoral support framework and electoral assistance interventions in its member states.

Since 2014, the deployment of long term observers has enabled ECOWAS Election Observer Missions (ECOWAS EOMs) to assess crucial pre-election activities based on information obtained from key national election stakeholders. Currently, preliminary statements issued by ECOWAS EOMs reflect technical assessments of the pre-election and of the immediate post-election phases. To promote the compliance of ECOWAS member states with international standards for democratic elections, and to contribute to the overall quality of elections in West Africa, ECOWAS EOMs make recommendations aimed to further strengthen future electoral processes in the member states of the regional block. Until now the submission of the final report to the national Government of countries usually marked the completion of the election assessment by ECOWAS. Despite the fact that ECOWAS seeks to contribute to improved quality of electoral processes in West Africa the regional body is yet to develop a systematic approach to engaging its Member States on the recommendations made by its EOMs. To ensure a more effective implementation of its adopted long-term assessment methodology, ECOWAS has come to recognise the need to follow up on its EOM recommendations and the importance of tracking the progress of member states with the implementation of these recommendations.

ECOWAS is exploring avenues for the inclusion of follow-up missions in its overall long-term election assessment methodology. Follow-up missions will afford ECOWAS opportunities to keep track of recommendations of its EOMs, to assess countries' level of implementation of these recommendations, to assess the impact of the recommendations on the national electoral reform agenda and to support electoral stakeholders, particularly EMBs, to keep these recommendations in focus ahead of the next cycle of elections. Within the framework of the cycle-based election support methodology, the outcome of the follow-up missions will also feed into the work of NAMs. The deployment of follow-up missions will also provide ECOWAS a complete overview of the electoral process throughout the electoral cycle.

3. Methodological Considerations

3.1. Needs Assessment Missions:

Purpose:

To conduct a technical assessment of the legal and operation aspects of the electoral process to identify the capacity and needs of stakeholders ahead of an election. NAM reports inform the ECOWAS Commission's decision on the nature and scope of electoral support/ assistance to be provided to the Member State.

The NAMs specifically assess whether the necessary political, socio-economic, and technical conditions are conducive for the conduct of democratic, peaceful and credible elections; they identify potential challenges, risks

and opportunities associated with the electoral process, to determine the role or potential role of the different national and international electoral stakeholders. The NAMs also assess the state of preparations for the electoral process to determine the role that players, like ECOWAS could play to complement other stakeholders and to contribute to the successful conduct of elections.

Composition:

Considering the technical nature of the assessment, it is advisable that the NAMs be comprised of technical experts with expertise in thematic areas such as electoral operations, information technology, voter registration, gender and inclusivity, civic and voter education, conflict management. The mission should include at least one staff of the ECOWAS EAD who will provide guidance from an institutional perspective. The NAM will also be supported by the ECOWAS bureau in the host country to provide background information and arrange meetings.

The selection of experts should be informed by the thematic areas identified for support in the election observer report on the host country. It should also be informed by the findings of the follow up mission.

Duration:

It is advisable to deploy a NAM well ahead of the election to give enough time to develop and implement programmes or interventions based on the findings of the mission. It should be considered to deploy a NAM at 15 months ahead of Election Day. However, speaking in terms of the electoral cycle, it is advisable to deploy a NAM right at the beginning of the host country's election calendar. The deployment of a NAM, should be considered for a period of 5-7 days.

Interactions:

During the deployment of the NAM, the focus should be on gathering information from institutions and actors on the technical preparedness for the election. While the electoral authority should be the primary focus of the NAM, other institutions are: the judiciary, security agencies, and media regulatory agencies. Key actors to interact with are: the press union, civil society organisations, pressure groups, political parties and candidates. Donor agencies and international technical partners must also be consulted to get an overview of election support initiatives in the host country, to ensure that the initiatives to be developed by ECOWAS are complementary.

It is important to mention that this list is not exhaustive, but the list of institutions and actors should be developed based on the host country's institutional framework, the ECOWAS EOM recommendations and in consultation with the ECOWAS bureau in the host country.

Outputs:

The NAM's main output is a report that highlight the following:

- i. The context of the elections
 - o Political analysis
 - o Human rights framework (taking into account press freedom, gender and minority rights)
 - o Socio-economic issues
- ii. Risk factors and their implications for the elections
 - o Conflict and violence
 - o Economic factors
 - o Ethno-religious factors
 - o Political factors
- iii. Improvements and reforms since the last election
 - o Legal and electoral reforms
 - o Procedural improvements
 - o Level of implementation of ECOWAS EOM recommendations
 - o Institutional reforms
- iv. State of preparedness for the elections
 - o Preparedness of the EMB, civil society and political parties
- v. Capacity analysis of institutions and actors
 - o Strengths and weaknesses of institutions and actors
- vi. Needs analysis
 - o Identifying gaps / needs ahead of the elections

- vii. Existing electoral support initiatives
 - Overview of election programmes and international support
- viii. Electoral support considerations for the ECOWAS Commission
 - Political engagement
 - Conflict prevention initiatives
 - Technical assistance
 - Monetary assistance
- ix. Other considerations

The report should mainstream crosscutting issues like gender and inclusivity, security and the use of technology.

Considering the technical nature of the report, it is advisable that it should not be published. It should rather be submitted to the ECOWAS Commission to inform further action. Through the structures of ECONEC, it is also advisable that the capacity and needs analysis sections of the report should be shared with the electoral authority of the host country to drive improvements going forward.

Other considerations:

- Possible political implications: while the NAM is a technical exercise, there could be political implications. These should be considered before deployment.
- Publicity and profile of the NAM: considering that the NAM is a technical exercise, it is advisable that the mission should not be publicised and should not hold have media engagements (interviews, social media posting etc)
- Stakeholder expectations from the NAM: there is the possibility that stakeholders especially the electoral authorities that ECOWAS will provide technical or monetary support to the electoral process after the NAM.

3.2. Follow-up missions

Purpose:

To monitor the implementation of EOM recommendations and identify possible areas of support to enable Member States to implement recommendations.

Through the follow up methodology, there is an effective link between election assessment and electoral support/assistance. This methodology also provides a platform for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of ECOWAS involvement in its Member States.

Overview of methodology:

This methodology entails two steps and in some cases it could involve up to three steps. The first step is a ***post-EOM mission*** deployed to make a formal presentation of the EOM recommendations and consult with stakeholders on the recommendations. This step should be taken within 3-4 months after the election to ensure that it feeds into post-election review initiatives in the country.

The second step is a ***recommendation tracking/monitoring mission*** deployed to ascertain the level of implementation of EOM recommendations and identify possible areas of support required for the implementation of EOM reports. This step should be taken within 12-15 months of the deployment of the first follow-up mission.

The third step mentioned above may be necessary in post-conflict or transition contexts that require further monitoring. In such cases, rather than deploy standalone follow up missions, it is advisable to consider merging such follow-up initiatives with the NAM and fact finding missions to these countries. This can be achieved by developing a hybrid terms of reference for such missions.

The relevance of the follow-up methodology lies in the fact that it bridges the gaps between ECOWAS pre-election engagements (fact-finding missions and high-level political engagements) and its post-election engagements in its Member States. It also prevents situations where EOMs are deployed in contexts that have remained static and these EOMs issue similar reports across different electoral cycles. Furthermore, this methodology strengthens the capacity of electoral authorities and other actors in ECOWAS Member States to implement ECOWAS EOM recommendations.

Composition:

For post-EOM missions, it is advisable to involve the Head of Mission during the presentation of the recommendations to the electoral authorities, parliament and political parties. It is also advisable to involve the LTO coordinators in a mission of this nature. For the facilitation of stakeholder roundtables, these events could be facilitated by ECOWAS technical staff or the LTO coordinator.

For the recommendations tracking/monitoring mission, it is advisable that such a mission should comprise of ECOWAS commission staff and possibly a representative of ECONEC.

Duration:

The post-EOM missions should be considered for 3-4 days during which stakeholder roundtables will be held. The recommendations tracking/monitoring missions should also be considered for 3-4 days during which one-on-one meetings will be held with selected stakeholders.

Interactions:

Post-EOM missions should focus on the electoral authorities, civil society, political parties and relevant parliamentary committees responsible for electoral matters. Other interactions of the post-EOM missions should be determined by the institutions and actors addressed in the EOM report. To shorten the length of the mission, these interactions may be considered in form of roundtable events targeted at different stakeholder.

Recommendations tracking/monitoring missions should also focus primarily on the electoral authority. Other stakeholders should be identified based on the number of recommendations addressed to them in the EOM report.

Outputs:

The follow up missions produce reports that should inform ECOWAS further engagement during the electoral cycle in the host country.

The report of the post-EOM mission should provide an overview of stakeholder feedback on the EOM recommendations. It should also provide an overview of stakeholder strategies for implementation of EOM recommendations. This report will form the basis for the recommendations tracking mission.

The report of the recommendations tracking/monitoring mission should provide an overview of the EOM recommendations and the level of implementation. This can be done in form of a table. The report should also include a section on areas of support required for effective implementation of the recommendations. This report will also feed into the NAM report to inform possible ECOWAS support to the host country.

Other considerations:

- For successful implementation of follow up initiatives, the ECOWAS Commission may consider publishing its EOM reports as it is difficult to hold stakeholders accountable to recommendations that are not published.
- Follow up methodology also requires reconsideration of how EOM recommendations are drafted. Recommendations should be:
 - Should be targeted (specific to an institution or an actor)
 - Should be granular (not too broad)
 - Should be practicable
 - Should be based on international best practise and international standards based provided in specific regional benchmarks
 - Should be tied to specific issues raised in the body of the report, should not be stand alone
 - Should not be prescriptive (e.g. an EOM should not recommend a particular type of electoral system over another)

4. Possible areas of support by EISA

Prior to the signing of its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ECOWAS, EISA provided technical assistance to the sub-regional body on an ad hoc basis in 2015 and 2016. In view of the potential impact of ECOWAS' cycle-based election assessment on strengthening electoral process in West Africa, EISA intends to provide assistance to the body in the following areas:

4.1. Deployment of Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs)

Over the past two years, international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, including EISA, have deployed NAMs across the continent. ECOWAS has, in the past, participated in joint NAMs deployed by the United Nations and the AU in West Africa. Upon conclusion of the in-country assessment the NAM produces a report. The report of the NAM is an internal document which informs the development of strategies for the design and implementation of targeted electoral support interventions in a given country.

EISA proposes to deploy one or two staff to support ECOWAS teams in the field during the NAMs. EISA will provide support the drafting the NAM reports. Depending on available funds, ECOWAS and EISA would endeavour to systematically deploy these NAMs to countries holding critical elections and post-conflict elections.

4.2. Support to ECOWAS Follow-up Missions

To effectively support the entire ECOWAS election assessment cycle EISA intends to play the following roles in the conduct of ECOWAS follow-up missions.

- i. Provide support in the planning of follow-up missions. EISA will give technical inputs in the planning phase of the pre-mission. The involvement of EISA in the planning phase will ensure that EISA has a background of the in-country preliminary discussions with national stakeholders prior to the roundtable. The final report of ECOWAS EOMs will be officially presented during the roundtable.
- ii. Conduct country-specific background research on recommendations made by election observer groups on specific elections within the West African sub-region. EISA will undertake research to track recommendations issued by observer groups in the host country. Based on this research, EISA will provide a database of EOM recommendations to the EAD of ECOWAS which will form the basis of the stakeholder consultations. EISA could also make presentations on the results of the background research during the stakeholder roundtables in the host country.
- iii. Develop a database of all the recommendations made by ECOWAS EOMs in its Member States to provide a basis for effect recommendations tracking. The tool will enable the ECOWAS to have comparative data per national electoral stakeholder in all its member states.

EISA proposes to deploy teams of 2 staff for the purpose of EISA's participation in the planning phase and in the roundtable of electoral stakeholders.

4.3. Database of ECOWAS EOM recommendations

As a fourth level of support to ECOWAS follow-up missions, EISA proposes to assist ECOWAS with the development of a database of recommendations of ECOWAS EOMs. Through its election observation missions ECOWAS have made recommendations to national election stakeholders over different electoral cycles. There is a need to develop a database of ECOWAS EOM recommendations to enable the body to track progress made by the various national stakeholders as well as the level of improvement in the quality of electoral processes across the sub-region. Furthermore, a database of recommendations will also enable ECOWAS to check the consistency of its recommendations across different thematic issues, stakeholders and countries.

4.4. Development of Guidelines/ Handbook on ECOWAS Follow-up Methodology

EISA proposes to jointly host a methodology workshop with other international observer groups to share comparative experience on follow-up missions. Participants at the workshop will be drawn from the AU, peer Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the European Union (EU), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), The Carter Centre (TCC) and other relevant international observer groups. Following the methodology workshop, EISA proposes to jointly draft the handbook on follow-up with the EAD of ECOWAS. For wider dissemination of this important tool within and beyond West Africa EISA proposes to publish the handbook in English, French and Portuguese, the three official languages of ECOWAS.

