

Comunidade Económica dos  
Estados da África Ocidental

Economic Community  
of West African States



Communauté Economique  
des Etats de l'Afrique  
de l'Ouest

Ordinary Session of the Authority  
of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS  
Abuja, December 2008

**P**olitical **D**eclaration on the  
**P**revention Of **D**rug **A**buse, **I**llicit **D**rug  
**T**rafficking and **O**rganized **C**rimes in **W**est  
**A**frica

**A**buja **D**eclaration

## **PREAMBLE**

**We the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) solemnly declare as follows:**

**Reaffirming** the Treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States signed in Lagos on 28 May 1975, with subsequent amendments in 1993 and 2006 primarily;

**Conscious** of the need to promote, foster and accelerate the economic and social development of our States in order to improve the living standards of our peoples;

**Convinced** that drug abuse, illicit drug trafficking, diversion of chemical precursors and other organised crimes are serious threats to the regional and national security, political, economic and social development of Member States;

**Further Convinced** that illicit drug trafficking and organised crimes undermine the rule of law, democratic institutions and transparent governance in our Member States;

**Concerned** about the impacts of money laundering and other financial crimes in the region which are intricately related to drug trafficking and other organised crimes;

**Concerned about** the linkages between illicit drug trafficking and proliferation of illegal arms especially small arms and light weapons and the consequences on peace and security of the region;

**Alarmed** by the fact that Member States of the Community are targets of large consignments and transshipments of illicit drugs, especially cocaine, en route to consumer destinations, especially in Europe and North America;

**Fully aware** of the adverse consequences that drug trafficking and abuse can have in West Africa, especially with regard to public health;

**Deeply concerned** about the problem of cannabis cultivation, trafficking and consumption as well as the production and trafficking of psychotropic substances and other substances of abuse in the region with its attendant negative health, social and economic consequences and its negative impact on the security of Member States;

**Concerned** that cannabis is the most cultivated, widespread and the most frequently abused illicit drug in the region especially among young people;

**Concerned** about the widespread availability of counterfeited and sub-standard pharmaceutical products, including those containing internationally controlled substances, in our individual Member States and the negative health consequences on our populations;

**Taking into account** resolution 51/31 of the United Nations Commission of Narcotic Drugs which calls on its Member States to respond to the threat posed by the distribution of internationally controlled substances on the unregulated market;

**Affirming** the rights of all citizens of the community to live in safety and security without the threats posed by drug abuse and trafficking and other organized crimes;

**Conscious** of the need to provide adequate incentives and enabling work environment for those personnel involved in drug law enforcement.;

**Aware** of the need to provide cannabis farmers with legitimate, profitable and sustainable means of livelihood

**Noting** with appreciation the important role of the civil society and non-governmental organizations in helping to address the problem of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, diversion of chemical precursors and to prevent drug abuse in the region;

**Mindful** of the particular link between drug trafficking and illegal small arms circulation;

**Recognizing** that poverty, illiteracy, inadequate resources and limited law enforcement and criminal justice capacity contribute significantly to the region being used for the transshipment of drugs for illicit markets;

**Recalling** the ECOWAS Protocol of 1999 relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security which calls for the control of transborder crimes within the Community, the adoption of anti corruption measures and the coordination of national policies for the maintenance of regional security;

**Recalling** the ECOWAS Protocol on Corruption A/P3/12/01 adopted by the Authority of Heads of State and Government in December 2001;

**Recalling** the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 29 July 1992 and the Cooperation Agreement between Member States' Police Forces on Investigation in Criminal Matters signed in December 2002;

**Recalling** the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and light weapons, their ammunitions and related materials of June, 2006 and the UN plan of action on small arms adopted in July 2001;

**Recalling also** the ECOWAS Convention on Extradition of 1994 and Protocol of 2005 which provided for the establishment of a regional Criminal Intelligence and Investigation Bureau (CIIB) and the ECOWAS Convention on Extradition of 1994;

**Reaffirming** the commitment of our Member States to the provisions of the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988;

**Reaffirming also** the commitment of our Member States to the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and its three supplementary Protocols as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003;

**Convinced** that these international legal instruments are essential tools in the fight against illicit traffic in drugs, diversion of chemical precursors, corruption and other organized crimes;

**Fully committed** to the realization of the goals and targets set at the twentieth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly held in 1998, devoted to countering the world drug problem together

**Stressing** the need to strengthen regional and international cooperation in criminal matters, with special emphasis on extradition, mutual legal assistance and confiscation of proceeds of crime;

**Emphasising** the urgent need for Member States to fully implement the provisions of the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 29 July 1992 and the Cooperation Agreement between Member States' Police Forces on Investigation in Criminal Matters signed in December 2002;

**Noting** the Statement of the UN Security Council at its 5762<sup>nd</sup> Meeting in which it urged the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS to take steps to confront the threat of illicit drug trafficking affecting the region,

**Noting** the importance of resolution 51/18 of the United Nations Commission of Narcotics Drugs, entitled "Strengthening International Support for States in West Africa in their Efforts to Combat Drug Trafficking", in which it calls on Member States and relevant international organizations, in coordination with the ECOWAS Member States, to strengthen ongoing initiatives and programmes, in particular those designed by States in West Africa and by ECOWAS to facilitate the development of other relevant programmes, in order to combat drug trafficking through West Africa, and to provide financial and technical assistance;

**Welcoming** the commitment of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs to support ECOWAS Member States in combating illicit drug trafficking;

**Acknowledging** the ongoing individual and collective efforts against illicit drug trafficking and related crimes by Member States at the regional and national levels, especially within the framework of the ECODRUG Fund, Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering (GIABA), the West

African Joint Operations (WAJO), the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) and other similar multi-lateral and bilateral initiatives to address the drug and trafficking problem affecting the region as well as the diversion of chemical precursors;

**Re-Affirming** our support for the Praia Political Declaration of 1997 for the coordination of Drug Control activities, which represented an initial response to the need to wage a more energetic and coordinated fight against the drug phenomenon and related criminal activities in West Africa.

**Convinced** that tackling drug trafficking and related crime problems in the region requires renewed political commitment, making it a priority and developing a regional Action Plan as part of an effective response;

**Stressing** that effective action to prevent and combat drug trafficking, drug abuse and diversion of chemical precursors also requires sufficient means and an integrated approach in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, both in the countries of origin, transit and destination;

**Emphasising** the need for all countries to take measures to prevent cultivation, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs, to prosecute and punish cultivators, traffickers, and those who aid and abet them and to share useful information to assist in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders in other jurisdictions, while fully respecting their rights to due process;

**We hereby proclaim our strong commitment to fight illicit drug trafficking , diversion of chemical precursors and other related crimes, to prevent drug abuse and provide treatment and support for those who abuse drugs and those dependent on drugs, and:**

1. **Pledge** to accord drug control the priority it deserves and at the highest level of Government in our Member States as well as at the ECOWAS Commission;
2. **Call upon** our Member States who have not yet done so, to ratify forthwith the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, that Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and the Protocols supplementing that Convention as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, and to amend their national legislation, where necessary, in order to meet the requirements of these Conventions and the Protocols;
3. **Also call upon** our Member States who have not yet done so, to ratify forthwith the ECOWAS Convention A/P1/7/92 on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, the ECOWAS Convention A/P1/8/94 on Extradition, the 1999 Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention,

Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, the Protocol on Corruption of 2001, the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms of 2006 and the Protocol on the Establishment of a regional Criminal Intelligence and Investigation Bureau of 2005;

4. **Call upon** Member States to ensure that their existing laws against illicit drug trafficking provide enough deterrence;
5. **Further call upon** our Member States to intensify ongoing efforts against drug trafficking and other organised crimes, by strengthening enforcement mechanisms, including expanding the scope of predicate offences for money laundering to cover all acquisitive offences and prosecute those responsible for drug trafficking within our Member States, by ensuring that there is no impunity;
6. **Further call upon** our Member States to develop and implement comprehensive and integrated National Drug Control Master Plans to tackle the drug problem in the short and long term, with the support of local and international development partners and other relevant stakeholders;
7. **Urge** those States that are the main destination of the illicit drugs transhipped through the West African region to continue to make efforts to discourage the demand for the drugs in their countries;
8. **Invite** States and funding agencies, as well as relevant inter-governmental and international organizations and non-governmental organizations to provide financial and material assistance, including the provision of expertise, to support the ECOWAS Commission and Member States in their anti-drug trafficking and drug abuse prevention efforts;
9. **Commit** ourselves to work with the civil society and NGOs to control drug trafficking and abuse in the region as well as related crimes, in the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Response Action Plan, and subsequently, the development of a comprehensive, evidence-based, long term regional action plan,
10. **Urge** the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and all relevant UN institutions to strengthen their financial and technical assistance programme and cooperation with ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States within the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Response Action Plan;
11. **Pledge to** work with the development partners to fully implement the ECOWAS Regional Response Action Plan;

**We further commit ourselves to:**

1. **Develop** a regional legal framework to tackle drug trafficking and to facilitate the harmonisation of laws against drug trafficking within Member States in order to ensure that none of our Member States is used as a safe haven by drug traffickers and organized criminal groups due to weaknesses in its legislation and enforcement;
2. **Take appropriate measures** in collaboration with the countries of origin, transit and destination to enable law enforcement agencies to develop capacities to track the movement of illicit drugs and drug traffickers and to trace their assets for the purpose of forfeiture and confiscation by the appropriate courts in Member States;
3. **Take appropriate** steps to make health care and social support available, affordable and accessible to those who abuse drugs and those dependent on drugs;
4. **Use** all forms of communication and information to carry out public awareness campaigns to educate potential victims of drug trafficking and abuse and related crimes, their families, and the population at large;
5. **Provide or enhance** training for government officials, particularly law enforcement personnel including customs and immigration officers, prosecutors, judges, and other relevant officers in combating drug trafficking and related crimes;
6. **Support and strengthen** regional drug control institutions to be able to deliver quality and affordable training to relevant law enforcement and civil society organisations in the region;
7. **Establish or strengthen** specialized anti-drug trafficking/transnational organized crime law enforcement units/agencies and national forensic capabilities, with a view to investigating and prosecuting organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking and other related crimes;
8. **Promote** effective regional and international cooperation in criminal matters, with special emphasis on extradition, mutual legal assistance and confiscation of proceeds of crime;
9. **Establish or strengthen** central authorities designated to handle request for extradition and mutual legal assistance and to communicate such authorities to the United Nations for inclusion in the directory of Competent National Authorities under the drugs and crime conventions;
10. **Harmonise** procedures and practices to enhance mutual legal assistance, extradition and controlled-delivery operations between States with different legal systems and shall endeavour to deploy law

enforcement/criminal justice liaison personnel abroad to facilitate international law enforcement cooperation;

11. **Establish** more efficient border security measures to prevent and control drug trafficking without prejudice to ECOWAS Protocols and other international commitments on to the free movement of goods, services and people;
12. **Strengthen** law enforcement information gathering and intelligence capacity in the area of transnational organized crime by the creation of centralized inter-institutional investigative units/departments/agencies within our individual Member States and to create a regional network among them to foster regional cooperation and coordination;
13. **Initiate or enhance** efforts to collect and analyze data at the regional level, on a regular basis, on the nature, trend, magnitude and socio-economic impact of drug trafficking, particularly on the means and methods used in illicit drug trafficking
14. **Exchange** information among law enforcement and other agencies of our Member States, as well as with other countries of origin, transit and destination, and with the other relevant international organisations, including the United Nations, ICPO-Interpol, World Customs Organisation (WCO);
15. **Support and cooperate** with national and community institutions, civil society and relevant non-governmental organizations in their activities against illicit drug trafficking;
16. **Strengthen** preventive measures, including educational and social measures to discourage drugs abuse and to collaborate with source, transit and destination countries in the development and implementation of similar measures;
17. **Invite** the Commission of the African Union, the United Nations Security Council and the European Union to play active roles in the mobilisation of the international community towards implementing this Political Declaration and the Regional Response Action Plan.

**Therefore:**

1. **Adopt** the present Declaration as an expression of our political commitment to confront the threats of illicit drug trafficking and other organised crimes and drug abuse in our Member States;
2. **Adopt** the ECOWAS Regional Response Action Plan and **pledge** to fully implement the Plan at the national and regional levels through the use of the ECODRUG Fund, and with the support and cooperation of development partners;

3. **Direct** the ECOWAS Commission to coordinate and monitor the implementation of this Political Declaration and Regional Response Action Plan, and report to the Ordinary Summits of Heads of State in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively, on the progress made;
4. **Direct** the ECOWAS Commission to forge close links with Member States government and civil institutions and organizations involved in drug control in order to achieve better coordination in the control of drug trafficking, drug abuse and crime prevention in the region, and for this purpose **establish** an appropriate structure under the direct supervision of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, responsible for overall coordination and monitoring of regional initiatives undertaken in the area of illicit drug trafficking and drug abuse prevention,
5. **Direct** the ECOWAS Commission to take appropriate action for the elaboration of an ECOWAS Convention against illicit drug trafficking and abuse.

**IN FAITH WHEREOF WE, THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES, HAVE SIGNED**

THIS DECLARATION . DONE AT ....., THIS..... DAY OF DECEMBER 2008

IN A SINGLE ORIGINAL IN THE ENGLISH, FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE LANGUAGES, THE THREE TEXTS BEING EQUALLY AUTHENTIC

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**H.E.Dr. Thomas Boni YAYI**  
 President of the Republic of BENIN

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**H.E. Blaise COMPAORE**  
 President of BURKINA FASO  
 Chairman of The Authority of Heads of State and Government

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**H. E. Pedro Verona Rodrigues PIRES**  
 President of the Republic of Cape Verde

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**H.E. Laurent GBAGBO**  
 President of the Republic of COTE D'IVOIRE

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**H.E. Dr. Yahya A.J.J. JAMMEH**  
 President of the Republic of THE GAMBIA

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**H.E. John Agyekum KUFUOR**  
 President of the Republic of GHANA

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**H. E.Gen. Lansana Conte**  
 President of the Republic of GUINEA

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**H.E. Gen. João Bernardo VIEIRA**  
 President of the Republic of GUINEA BISSAU

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**H.E. Ellen JOHNSON SIRLEAF**  
President of the Republic of LIBERIA

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**H.E. Amadou Toumani TOURE**  
President of the Republic of MALI

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**H.E. Mamadou TANDJA**  
President of the Republic of NIGER

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**H.E. ALH. Umaru Musa YAR'ADUA**  
President and Commander-in-Chief of the  
Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of  
NIGERIA

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**H.E. Maitre Abdoulaye WADE**  
President of the Republic of SENEGAL

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**H.E. Dr Ernest Bai KOROMA**  
President of the Republic of SIERRA LEONE

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**H.E. Faure Essozimna GNASSINGBE**  
President of the TOGOLESE Republic