



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
SUB REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA

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## **Report of the Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting on Assessment of the Implementation of the ECA-WA/ECOWAS Multi-Year Programme of Cooperation**

**10 to 11 November 2009 - Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

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10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2009, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

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## ACRONYMS

AEGM	Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
EBID	ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECA-WA	Economic Commission for Africa, West Africa Office
EBF	ECOWAS Business Forum
ECOWAP	ECOWAS Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MYP	Multi-Year Programme
OIC	Officer-in-Charge
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OPM	Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management
PPDU	Project Preparation and Development Unit
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SRO-WA	Sub-Regional Office – West Africa of the ECA
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WACSOFF	West African Civil Society Organizations' Forum
WAIGO	West African Inter-Governmental Organizations

## 1. Introduction

1. This is the report of the proceedings and outcome of the Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting (AEGM) on the assessment of the multi-year programme (MYP) of cooperation between the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held on 10 to 11 November 2009 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The purpose of the AEGM was to assess progress in the implementation of the ECA-ECOWAS MYP. A draft report prepared by a consultant provided the basis of the review of the multi-year programme.
2. The ECA Sub-regional Office for West Africa (ECA-WA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ECOWAS Commission in August 2007 to formalize collaboration in the planning and execution of activities towards facilitating regional integration and responding to the special needs of member States in West Africa. The signing of the MOU was motivated by; inter alia, the ongoing United Nations-wide reforms and the Economic Commission for Africa's support for the African Union Commission which emphasizes collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the ECA's repositioning and its Action Plan on Sub-regional Offices (SROs) calling for strengthened collaboration with RECs.
3. The objectives of the ECA-WA/ECOWAS MYP are to (i) support the ECOWAS Commission's capacity building efforts in line with its Vision and Strategic Plan (ii) strengthen cooperation and joint undertaking of activities between the two institutions on regional integration and economic cooperation. At the signing of the MOU on the multi-year programme in 2007, the institutions identified eight thematic areas to kick-start cooperation. The broad thematic areas are:
  - strengthening the capacity of the ECOWAS Commission;
  - support to ECOWAS Commission for Consensus and Policy Advocacy;
  - monitoring the state of Integration and Economic Performance in West Africa;
  - support to the implementation of NEPAD Infrastructural Programmes in sub-region,
  - trade Issues;
  - gender Issues;
  - promoting good governance; and
  - climate change.
4. Each of these thematic areas consists of specific activities to be undertaken as part of the collaboration.
5. Cognizant of the dynamic nature of sub regional needs and the evolution of the regional integration agenda, the two institutions agreed on the need to periodically review the progress made, take stock of the achievements, highlight success factors and strengthen them and identify challenges and collectively develop remedial strategies. Such a strategic review was also expected to identify new areas for further cooperation in joint programming and resource mobilization.
6. It is against this background that ECA-WA, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, organized this Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting to review the implementation

of the MYP as part its Work Programme for 2008/09. A consultant prepared the draft evaluation report which analysed the cooperation framework and provided recommendations to strengthen the cooperation.

## **2. Participation**

7. The Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting was attended by government officials from eleven members States of the ECOWAS Commission (Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) and staff from the ECOWAS Commission and ECA-WA. The names of participants and their affiliation appear in Annex 1.

## **3. Account of Proceedings**

### **Opening Session**

(Agenda item 1)

8. The opening session included statements from the Officer-in-Charge of the ECA Sub regional Office for West Africa, a representative of the ECOWAS Commission and a representative of the Government of Burkina Faso.
9. The Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the ECA Subregional Office for West Africa welcomed the participants to the AEGM and thanked them for accepting the invitation to participate in the meeting. He expressed his appreciation of the hospitality of the host, the Government of Burkina Faso.
10. The OIC went on to provide the background to the MYP and the underlying thrust of the arrangement within the framework of ECA's technical assistance to African Union Commission/NEPAD programmes. He informed the meeting that the ECA SRO Action Plan which stressed the importance of working with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in delivering on technical assistance led to the development of MYPs. The OIC emphasized that through MYPs, collaboration between ECA's Subregional Offices and RECs can be strengthened. He observed that cooperation had indeed yielded positive results and important lessons. The OIC noted that after more than two years of cooperation and joint undertaking of activities under the MYP, it was imperative to undertake a detailed review of progress in implementation, identify challenges and chart the way forward. Such a review would help identify new areas for cooperation and further deepen collaboration. The OIC further observed that the participation of member States in the review was important as it ensured that the MYP satisfied the aspirations of its stakeholders.
11. The Director of Multilateral Surveillance of the ECOWAS Commission welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked the Government of Burkina Faso for hosting the meeting. He observed that the meeting was taking place during a period marked by many challenges including food, financial, and energy crises which resulted in deepening the economic problems which further constrained the attainment of MDGs by ECOWAS member States. He went on to say that the economic crisis anticipated to follow the financial crisis would have long term adverse effects on West African economies and will

threaten the ECOWAS Agenda of poverty reduction. The Director emphasized that given these challenges, effective development depends in implementing harmonized economic policies across the region. Partnership with ECA is therefore important towards implementing common activities in the region. He underlined the importance of the thematic areas of the MYP and the collaboration with ECA to build a prosperous West Africa. The Director expressed his confidence with the future of the collaboration with ECA and emphasized that this partnership was important for both institutions.

12. While officially opening the AEGM, the Senior Advisor to the Minister of Economy and Finance of Burkina Faso, warmly welcomed the experts on behalf of the Minister and expressed appreciation of the technical assistance offered to ECOWAS and its member States by ECA and its sub-regional Office for West Africa. He reminded the experts that the MYP approach was adopted to create a formal framework to enable ECA to support the capacity building efforts of ECOWAS in line with its vision and strategic plan and for both institutions to strengthen their cooperation and joint undertaking of activities towards regional integration and addressing the region's special needs. The Senior Advisor expressed his firm belief that the synergy between the two institutions would benefit the ECOWAS member States and would furthermore strengthen the integration of economies and markets.
13. The Senior Advisor recalled the joint undertakings under the MYP to include among others, (i) the creation and institutionalization of the ECOWAS Business Forum in February 2009 and, (ii) the Forum of West African Intergovernmental Organizations launched on December 2007 in Ouagadougou and strengthened in the same town in September 2009 as an illustration of the fruitful working relationship between the two institutions. He also alluded to various other collaborative activities between the two institutions as further demonstration of the deepening joint undertaking of activities. Before declaring the AEGM officially open the meeting, the Senior Advisor to the Minister called on the experts to critically assess progress in the implementation of the MYP and propose the way forward. He also implored the participants to ensure that regional priorities continue to be at the top of collaborative activities.

#### **Election of the Bureau**

14. The meeting elected the following Bureau:

Chair: Burkina Faso  
Rapporteurs: ECOWAS and ECA-WA

#### **Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work** (Agenda item 2)

15. The Agenda shown below was adopted for the meeting:
  1. Opening of the Meeting
  2. Adoption of Programme of Work
  3. The ECA Repositioning and the SRO Action Plan - Implications for Regional Integration and Collaboration with Regional Economic Communities

4. The ECOWAS Strategic Plan and Vision 2020 – Implications for Collaboration with ECA
5. The Assessment of the Implementation of the ECA-WA/ECOWAS Multi-year Programme
6. Recommendations of the AEGM and Way Forward
7. Closure of the Meeting

**The ECA Repositioning and the SRO Action Plan - Implications for Regional Integration and Collaboration with Regional Economic Communities**  
(Agenda item 3)

16. A representative of the ECA-WA Secretariat provided a preview to the session and indicated that the purpose of this session was to provide the background to ECA/SRO Action Plan and discuss the rationale for the multiyear programme with ECOWAS.
17. With regard to the ECA/SRO Action plan, the presentation singled out the findings of the evaluation of sub regional offices by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in 2005, indicating that, while SROs remain vital parts of ECA, their mandate was only partially fulfilled. Hence their role, visibility and outreach were limited, and their support to regional economic communities varies in scope and effectiveness. Also, they were not supported by adequate resources. The recommendations arising from these findings called for: (i) enhanced collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities; (ii) more focused programming of SRO activities; (iii) creative dissemination of information (electronic space), and (iv) the alignment of expertise and skills of SROs with sub regional priorities.
18. The presentation went on to refer to the move by the UN General Assembly through its Resolution 60/235 of 23 December 2005, which, in response to the OIOS evaluation, requested the Secretary General to present to its 61<sup>st</sup> session a comprehensive plan of action to strengthen the ECA sub regional offices. The SROs were also the subject of the comprehensive review of the ECA conducted by the Executive Secretary in early 2006, the outcome of which were endorsed by the ECA Conference of Ministers at its annual meeting held in May 2006. This review placed a particular emphasis on the refocused mandate and mission of SROs, better products and services and improved delivery modalities through ICTs and partnerships.
19. As a result of these efforts, the SRO Action Plan was adopted with the mandate and mission of sub regional offices refocused on the promotion of Africa's integration and development from a sub regional perspective in seamless relation with the RECs. It is in line with this new orientation that the SROs were required to sign and implement Multiyear programmes with the RECs, particularly ECOWAS in the West African sub region. It was expected that, by pooling SRO and RECs resources together, the MYP would lead to enhanced capacities to initiate, implement, monitor and evaluate programme delivery at sub regional level, and subsequently broaden and deepen the process of integration.

20. The presenter concluded by calling on the delegates to reflect on the relevance of the MYP as a model for advancing the regional integration agenda the member States entrusted to ECOWAS and ECA.
21. In the ensuing deliberation, the delegates commended ECA and the ECOWAS Commission for the decision to formalize their cooperation through the Multiyear Programme. They debated the state of regional integration in West Africa in general, and sought clarification on the consistency between the MYP and the ECOWAS 2020 Vision. They were particularly appreciative of the prospect for enhanced capacity for regional programme delivery, which could result from the pooling of the ECA and ECOWAS Commission's resources. However, they were of the view that, for MYP to achieve the stated goal, it should be materialized with time-bound, periodic programmes, with clearly identified resources and appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

**The ECOWAS Vision 2020 and the Long-term Strategic Priorities: Implications for Collaboration with ECA**

(Agenda item 4)

22. The ECOWAS Director of Strategic Planning informed that his presentation aimed to: (i) communicate the main elements of the ECOWAS Vision 2020; (ii) present the strategic goals/priorities under the Regional Strategic Plan; (iii) describe the frameworks used in defining the regional strategic plan and (iv) locate the MYP within this framework and infer on the implications for collaboration with ECA.
23. After presenting the background of the ECOWAS Vision adopted in 2007, the presenter emphasized that the Vision's purpose that was to "create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation". He observed that this has the potential to lay the foundation for solid economic growth and prosperity in ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Commission had prepared a Regional Strategic Plan based on strategic goals and priorities in-order to implement the Vision. However, the presenter alluded to many challenges in pursuing this Vision. These include; limited capacity to access and harness resources, limited ability to maintain economic and political stability and ability to adopt dialogue and foster relations among member States.
24. The presenter informed the meeting that the draft of the Plan has already been sent to all ECOWAS stakeholders for comments and review. He observed that the six ECOWAS strategic priorities should form the basis any future MYP. The priority areas are; promotion of good governance and upgrade conflict prevention, promotion of a competitive business environment, sustained development and cooperation, deepen economic and monetary integration, reinforcement of institutional capacity, and strengthening mechanisms for integration into the global market.
25. In conclusion, the Director re-iterated that the original thematic areas in the MYP could indeed be located in the strategic plan. Going forward it is important for planning to be synchronised, with similar programme timeframes for the two institutions. Such synchronization would help minimise duplication of programmes and facilitate

collaboration with other cooperating partners. The new planning framework should clearly define the role of and entry points for strategic partners.

26. In the ensuing discussions, participants urged ECA and the ECOWAS Commission to take the necessary actions to match the strategic goals and priorities of the MYP and the Regional Strategic Plan, for more synergy of action between both institutions. The participants also recommended that:

- The ECOWAS Commission speed up the finalisation of its Regional Strategic Plan and take appropriate actions to accelerate its implementation in order to meet the dead line of 2020;
- ECOWAS ensure that political will to move towards the vision exists within the Commission and in the member States and therefore urged the Commission and its member States to demonstrate more commitment in making the Vision a reality; and
- UNECA and the ECOWAS Commission undertake joint resource mobilisation to secure resources to implement the common activities of the MYP and the Regional Strategic Plan.

**The Assessment of the Implementation of the ECA-WA/ECOWAS Multi-year Programme**  
(Agenda item 5)

27. The ECA-WA Consultant introduced the report by outlining the origins of the MYP and laid emphasis on the importance of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ECA Secretariat and ECOWAS Commission, and the subsequent adoption of a multi-year cooperation programme in August 2007. He identified this as marking a new phase in the long-standing cooperation arrangement between the two institutions. The presenter emphasized that the re-focused ECA agenda on promoting regional integration in support of the AU vision and priorities provided impetus to the process. He singled out the role of ECOWAS's internal drive towards enhanced coordination of partner assistance in enhancing zeal towards collaboration.

28. The Consultant informed the meeting that priority issues in the respective operational programmes of the two institutions shaped the content of the MYP. While recognizing that the collaborative framework had many activities, the presenter informed the meeting of the initial eight thematic areas in the collaborative arrangement and indicated that the review was based on assessment of delivery under these areas and the specified activities.

29. The presentation went on to demonstrate that while activities were undertaken under all the eight thematic areas of the MYP, the level of performance varied considerably, ranging from substantial to partial with a number of activities not being implemented. The presenter indicated that substantial performance was recorded in; Implementation of NEPAD infrastructural programmes; Trade Issues; Gender Issues; Promotion of good governance; and Climate Change. Yet progress was partial in; Strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS; Consensus and Policy Advocacy; and monitoring the state of integration and economic performance. The mixed performance was due to many challenges faced by both institutions. The presenter identified the failure of the two institutions to convene a

follow-up meeting to concretize on the MYP and develop an Action Plan as having impacted on progress in the implementation of the programme. Other challenges included poor information flow within the ECOWAS Commission and the lack of resources.

30. He identified the key challenges to the effective delivery on the MYP to include; unsynchronized programme planning, lack of planning of programme implementation, failure to institutionalize programme management, unsynchronized multiple-donor partnership arrangements, lack of a resource mobilization strategy, and the lack of a framework for programme performance monitoring and reporting.

31. The presenter recommended the following to address the challenges faced in the current MYP:

- ECA-WA and ECOWAS should synchronize programme planning to facilitate the translation of the current collaborative framework into a multi-year programme with annual action plans, taking into account of the presence of other cooperating partners and the general programming mechanism prevailing at the ECOWAS Commission and at ECA. A mechanism for planning the whole MYP programme should be put place.
- Management of the MYP should be institutionalized with designated focus points in each institution and in each area of cooperation. The review showed that personnel in some ECOWAS departments which should implement the programme were unaware of the MYP. To overcome this, technical focal points are needed at both institutions in cooperation areas.
- A mechanism to incorporate multiple donor partnership arrangements into the MYP needs to be developed to optimize on synergies in expertise and also optimize of resource utilization. A “stratified” programme management approach, in which only part of the MYP would be under the ECA-ECOWAS collaborative arrangement, could be adopted in areas where there are other donors, implementing similar programmes in collaboration with ECOWAS.
- To overcome the financial resources gap, ECA and ECOWAS should jointly mobilize resources for the implementation of the MYP to address the resources gap and given its status within the donor community and its links within the UN Family, ECA could play a leading role in resource mobilization for the MYP.
- Programme performance, monitoring and reporting mechanisms need to be developed and implemented. The review demonstrated the lack of agreed/formal procedures for systematic implementation and for monitoring progress in the current framework. There is no action plan which details who does what, when and at what cost. These basics in the programme implementation matrix are missing in the collaborative framework.

32. In conclusion, the Consultant recommended that a new multi-year programme and action plan be formulated based on the lessons of the current one and reflecting those principal changes that have taken place since its adoption which are likely to influence the course

of the West African integration and development process. The presenter emphasized that the new generation of MYPs should build on the positive momentum created by the work done since 2007 and should address the pertinent challenges, specifically those related to; programme planning and management, resource mobilization, management and monitoring of the implementation of the programme. Success with addressing these challenges will greatly enhance programme performance which will strengthen ECA's role in responding to the needs of ECOWAS member States and its contribution to regional integration. The setting up of a Committee to work on implementing these recommendations should be a priority.

33. In the ensuing discussions, participants expressed appreciation of the new spirit of cooperation between ECA and ECOWAS Commission as shown by the signing of the MOU on the MYP and the successful implementation of scheduled activities. They highlighted that such a cooperative framework avoided the duplication of efforts and ensured the optimal utilization of resources (human and financial) towards the common objectives of promoting regional integration and economic and social development. Member States expressed support for this initiative and also appreciated the opportunity to participate in reviewing the programme and looked forward to a formalized ongoing involvement in the process.
34. The detailed report by the consultant and observations and the recommendations made from the study were well received by the participants. As this was the first programme on formal cooperation between the two institutions and also given that ECA and ECOWAS have different planning frameworks, the non-alignment was expected. Participants expressed confidence that the non-alignment would be resolved as cooperation deepened.

### **Recommendations and the Way Forward**

(Agenda item 6)

35. Following these discussions, the participants made the following overall observations regarding the multi-year programme:
  - i. The MYP was relevant as new approach towards cooperation between the two institutions which allows for collaboration based on synergies and the exploitation of each other comparative strengths;
  - ii. The absence of a framework for joint programming, monitoring and evaluation, which would make the MYP time bound and ensure effective implementation;
  - iii. The absence of follow up technical meetings after the signing of the aide memoire by the two institutions to unbundle the initial MYP and prepare an implementation framework;
  - iv. The absence of a clearly defined entry point at the ECOWAS Commission which would facilitate the implementation of the MYP and enhance information flow on programmes and activities;
  - v. The recent progress made by the ECOWAS Commission in the review of the Strategic Plan, the design of a Community Development Programme and the Human Resources Department to address institutional constraints;
  - vi. There are no sources allocated by both institutions towards specific activities in the MYP;

- vii. The mixed results in the implementation of the MYP which were attributed to a number of challenges including manpower and financial resources constraints; and
- viii. The non involvement of member States and West African Inter-governmental Organizations in developing and implementing the current MYP.

36. In light of these observations, the participants adopted the following recommendations to address the challenges identified in the review;

- i. The MYP should be redesigned by exploring comparative strengths of the two institutions, and taking on board emerging challenges and new priorities under the reviewed six priority areas of the ECOWAS Strategic Plan;
- ii. An ECOWAS/ECA Committee should be established to spearhead; the redesign of the MYP, the development of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, and the development of joint resource mobilization strategies;
- iii. Quarterly meetings by the joint ECOWAS/ECA Committee spearheading the design, implementation and monitoring of the MYP should be institutionalized;
- iv. Entry points in the two institutions need to be clearly defined and new technologies be used to facilitate information flow internally and between ECOWAS and ECA;
- v. The joint Committee should develop mechanisms for the mobilization of resources to support the implementation of the MYP; and
- vi. Mechanisms to enable member States and West African Inter-governmental Organizations to be adequately informed about the MYP as a means of engendering ownership of the programme should be developed and implemented.

### **Closure of the Meeting**

(Agenda item 7)

37. In their closing remarks, representatives of both the ECOWAS Commission and ECA expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting and committed themselves to ensuring that recommendations of the AEGM would be implemented in full in order to strengthen collaboration and deliver assistance to member States. Both representatives expressed appreciation of the active participation by member States which ensured that ECA and ECOWAS remained relevant to the needs of their stakeholders. The important role played by the Government of Burkina Faso in hosting the meeting and in chairing the proceedings was greatly appreciated by ECOWAS and ECA.

38. The Senior Advisor to the Minister of Economy and Finance of Burkina Faso, officially closed the meeting on behalf of the Minister and expressed satisfaction at the recommendations of the meeting and expressed confidence that implementation of these recommendations would strengthen the collaborative framework under the ECA/ECOWAS multi-year programme.

## Annex 1

### List of Participants

#### Member States

##### 1. Bénin

**Mathieu T. Koukpo**

Directeur de la Prospective et de la Planification  
Stratégique  
Ministère de la Prospective, du Développement,  
de l'Evaluation des Politiques Publiques et de la  
Coordination de l'Action Gouvernementale  
Tél. : +229 90082037/97028266/21306819  
Email: [Kmath64@yahoo.fr](mailto:Kmath64@yahoo.fr)

##### 2. Burkina Faso

**COMPAORE Lassané**

Directeur des Etudes et de la Planification  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel: +226 50324511 / (+226) 50490138  
Cel: +226 70 25 39 47 / (+226) 78856064  
Fax: +226 50 33 25 97  
Email: [lasscomp@yahoo.fr](mailto:lasscomp@yahoo.fr) /  
[lasscomp@gmail.com](mailto:lasscomp@gmail.com)

**Celestin Bakouan**

Directeur de la Communication et de la Presse  
Ministérielle  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel: +226 50324306/50317902  
Cel: +226 70724785/76697746  
Dom: +226 50 45 05 97

**SIE Tiøye Antoine Marie**

Directeur de la Direction des Prévisions et des  
Analyses Macroéconomiques  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel: +226 50312472/70248270  
Email: [sie\\_tioye@yahoo.fr](mailto:sie_tioye@yahoo.fr)

**Traore Mahamadou**

Chef Service CAT/DG Coop  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel : +226 50306907/03 poste 158  
Cel : +226 70 72 08 60  
Email: [traoremahamadou27@yahoo.fr](mailto:traoremahamadou27@yahoo.fr)

**Kabre Mahamadou**

Inspecteur du Trésor  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel: +226 50326084/70025564  
Email: [kabre\\_mahamadou@yahoo.fr](mailto:kabre_mahamadou@yahoo.fr)

##### 3. Cote d'Ivoire

**Ndri Kouakou**

Sous Directeur Chargé des synthèses  
économiques  
Direction Général du Plan  
Ministère d'Etat, de Plan et du Développement  
Tel : +225 20 25 88 61  
Email : [Ketndri2004@yahoo.fr](mailto:Ketndri2004@yahoo.fr)

##### 4. Gambie

**Manneh Pa Abdoulie**

Principal Economist  
Ministry of State for Finance and Economic  
Affairs  
Tel: +220 4225773/2209909603  
Email: [pamanneh@hotmail.com](mailto:pamanneh@hotmail.com)

##### 5. Guinée Bissau

**M. CO Antonio**

Conseiller macroéconomique  
Ministère de l'économie, du plan et de  
l'intégration régionale  
Email: [coant1@hotmail.com](mailto:coant1@hotmail.com)  
Tel: +245 663 74 19

##### 6. Liberia

**J. Charles Nyema**

Senior Economist  
Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs  
Phone: +231-6-520-751  
Email: [cnyema@mopea.gov.lr](mailto:cnyema@mopea.gov.lr)

## 7. Mali

### **Adama Magassouba**

Macroéconomiste à la Cellule Technique du  
Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté au  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tel: +223 66 97 87 16  
Email: [admagas@yahoo.fr](mailto:admagas@yahoo.fr)

## 8. Niger

### **Iro Souley**

Directeur Général des programmes sectoriels au  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Tél : +227 20723258  
Cel: +227 93938815  
Email: [souleyiro@yahoo.fr](mailto:souleyiro@yahoo.fr)

## 9. Nigeria

### **Emagun Godwin O.**

Chief Administrative officer  
Federal Ministry of Finance  
Tel: +234 8037882440  
Email: [emagungodwin@yahoo.com](mailto:emagungodwin@yahoo.com)

## 10. Senegal

### **Chouaibou SONKO**

Conseiller technique à la Direction Générale du  
Plan au  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Cel: +221 775650503  
Tel: +221 338891703  
Email: [Csonko@yahoo.fr](mailto:Csonko@yahoo.fr)

## 11. Togo

### **Patrice Agbewonou TSOLEGNANOU**

Administrateur des Finances Chef Section Etude  
et Suivi des projets de Développement  
Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances  
Direction de l'Economie  
Tel: +228 221 02 50  
Cel: +228 903 1323  
Dom: +228 225 30 01  
Email: [patricetsolegnanou@yahoo.fr](mailto:patricetsolegnanou@yahoo.fr)

## ECOWAS COMMISSION

### **Lassane Kabore**

Directeur de la Surveillance Multilatéral  
Tel: 226 76449502/234 70 34 138346  
Email: [lkabore@ecowas.int](mailto:lkabore@ecowas.int) , [chlaskab@yahoo.fr](mailto:chlaskab@yahoo.fr)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria

### **Essien Abel Essien**

Director Strategic Planning  
Tel: +234 7034138343/8033139304/8058436345  
Fax: +234 9 314 3005  
Email: [essy@witty.com](mailto:essy@witty.com) , [eaessien@ecowas.int](mailto:eaessien@ecowas.int) ,  
[essyabel@yahoo.com](mailto:essyabel@yahoo.com)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria

### **Bougonou K. Djeri-Alassani**

Principal Programme Officer  
Policies and Regulations  
Environment Directory  
Tel: +234 80 67 13 01 59/805 0218912  
Email: [bdjeri@ecowas.int](mailto:bdjeri@ecowas.int) ,  
[bdjeri@yahoo.fr](mailto:bdjeri@yahoo.fr)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria

### **Safiatou Traore**

Consultante Secteur Privée  
Tel: +234 8085130388/+226 76 003539  
-mail: [safiatoutraore@ecowas.int](mailto:safiatoutraore@ecowas.int)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria

### **Dabire Bayaornibe**

Directeur de l'Energie  
Tel: + 226 70 24 90 52  
Email: [bdabire@hotmail.com](mailto:bdabire@hotmail.com)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria

## RESOURCE PERSON

### **David Asante,**

Economic, Monetary & Financial Consultant  
Afrinvest Consulting  
Tel: +233 20 201 1727/27 518 36 39  
Email: [rdasante@hotmail.com](mailto:rdasante@hotmail.com)  
Accra, Ghana

## **ECA –WA**

### **Emile Ahohe**

Directeur par interim  
Senior Economic Affairs Officer  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [eahohe@uneca.org](mailto:eahohe@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Ochozias Gbaguidi**

Economiste  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [gochozias@uneca.org](mailto:gochozias@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Joseph Foumbi**

Economiste  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [jfoumbi@uneca.org](mailto:jfoumbi@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Oliver Maponga**

Economiste  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [omaponga@uneca.org](mailto:omaponga@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Daniel Gbetnkom**

Economiste  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [dgbetnkom@uneca.org](mailto:dgbetnkom@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Bakary Dosso**

B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: + 227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [bdosso@uneca.org](mailto:bdosso@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Balkissa Allagbada**

Staff Assistant  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [abalkissa@uneca.org](mailto:abalkissa@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Kadijatou Amadou**

Staff Assistant  
B.P. 744 Maison des Nations Unies  
Tel: +227 20 72 29 61  
Fax: +227 20 72 28 94  
Email: [kamadou@uneca.org](mailto:kamadou@uneca.org)  
Niamey, Niger

### **Douka Sédiko**

ECA Regional Advisor on Infrastructure  
ECOWAS Commission  
Tel: +234 7030969911  
Email: [sdouka@uneca.org](mailto:sdouka@uneca.org)  
101, Yakubu Gowon Crescent-Asokoro  
Abuja, Nigeria