



**CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE ECOWAS  
INTEGRATION  
PROCESS**

**REVIEW OF THE  
TRANSITIONAL  
MANDATE**

**By**

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**(8 APRIL 2016 - 28 FEBRUARY 2018)**



## **INTRODUCTION**

Having served for almost two years as President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I would like to provide a brief overview of the major initiatives undertaken and progress made with the support of all Community statutory officers, as well as commitment of all staff of Community Institutions. I should therefore like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation for the outstanding support I enjoyed from every single one of them.

This report is structured in three (3) parts. It, first, presents an overview of the situation at the time we assumed office. It then highlights major achievements in the implementation of regional integration programmes, service delivery and working conditions. Lastly, it outlines challenges and prospects for strengthening regional integration.

## **STATUS REPORT**

On assumption of office, we noted that the Community was faced with multiple and multifaceted challenges, in particular:

- ◆ increased risk of non-payment of salaries to staff members;
- ◆ cash-flow problems and huge arrears towards suppliers and service providers;
- ◆ non-rationalization in the use of energy resulting in huge running costs;
- ◆ inadequate working tools for staff;
- ◆ slow progress in the institutional reform process;
- ◆ lack of progress in a number of Community programmes;
- ◆ high number of disputes with staff;
- ◆ poor internal control;
- ◆ failure to audit the 2013, 2014 and 2015 financial statements;
- ◆ Lack of predictability in the rotation of statutory positions.



**Marcel de Souza talking his oath of office**

### ***Increased risk of non-payment of salaries to staff members***

On assumption of office on 8 April 2016, I was informed that due to paucity of resources and difficult cash flow situation, there were no assurances that salaries would be paid at the end of April 2016. In view of this critical situation, I took two key measures aimed at reducing the recurrent cash-flow problems:

- ◆ Significant expenditure cuts by reducing delegation size and number of missions. The implementation of this measure led to a 56% reduction in related expenditure in 2016 and a further 35% in 2017;
- ◆ Stepping up Community Levy collection and advocacy with Member States. Advocacy work was carried out by presenting, during audiences granted by Heads of State, the situation of each country with respect to the Community Levy. I take this opportunity to welcome the positive and significant response from our Heads of State and Government.

### ***Cash-flow problems and huge arrears towards suppliers and service providers***

When I took office, I found out that the Commission owed over 200 service providers an accumulated debt of about US\$ 4,847,503.38, or UA 3,474,496.87 as at 8 April 2016 for various services (goods/work/consultancy).

In frustration, some suppliers have resorted to





**Marcel de Souza with former President of Liberia, Mrs. Ellen Jonson Sirleaf**

provide services to the Commission. This adversely affected the Commission's corporate image and negatively impacted its ability to meet its commitments/operations, due to lack of adequate tools.

***Non-rationalization in the use of energy resulting in huge running costs***

There was a systematic waste of resources in the use of energy, in particular diesel for generators. This was mainly due to lack of appropriate tools.

***Inadequate working tools for staff***

A large number of Commission staff had no office equipment, computers and office furniture.

***Slow progress in the institutional reform process***

Immediately I arrived, with the support of the Commission's management, I decided to expedite the institutional reform process, which had been slow for several years, despite the recruitment of a consultancy firm since 2013. I consequently stepped up the process by putting forward certain measures. They include cost cutting measures for



**Marcel de Souza with Former President Yakubu Gowon ECOWAS founding Father**

statutory appointees of the Commission, reduction in the number of Judges at the Court of Justice, removal of the positions of

legal action to recover their money whereas others were reluctant to

Deputy Directors-General of the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) and of the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), creation of the position of Auditor General and of a Secretary General to serve as the Community's institutional memory.

***Lack of progress in a number of Community programmes***

A number of programmes could not be implemented successfully. With the assistance of Commissioners, we gave a fresh impetus to project monitoring by staff in various Departments.

***Failure to audit the 2013, 2014 and 2015 financial statements***

An assessment of a number of irregularities in financial management indicated that the internal financial control system needs to be improved in order to curb fraudulent practices by unscrupulous staff. Besides, the institution had not audited its accounts for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

***Lack of predictability in the rotation of statutory positions***

Regarding the allocation of statutory positions within the Community, I noted that legal texts laying down the criteria for the allocation of these positions to Member States were not systematically implemented. Due to certain political considerations, the allocation of statutory positions had become extremely difficult and its predictability undermined. However, it should be noted that at the extraordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State

and Government held on 27 January 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Chairman of the Authority



**Simon Compaoré decorating Marcel de Souza with the medal of the Grand commander of Burkina Faso**



submitted, for consideration by his peers, a document aimed at strengthening the criteria for the allocation of statutory positions.

## **INTEGRATION PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

### ***II.1- INTEGRATION PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION***

#### ***Political Affairs, Peace and Regional Security***

With regard to Political Affairs, Peace and Regional Security, our tenure was undoubtedly marked by the post-election crisis in The Gambia, which was resolved without bloodshed and with a victory for democracy, thanks to the support of the Heads of State and Government to the Commission's initiatives.

Likewise, as part of its preventive diplomacy and dialogue mechanisms, the Commission continued its preventive efforts and dialogue building in Guinea-Bissau, supported the initiatives undertaken by Mali in the framework of the inclusive dialogue with rebel groups and organised fora on the culture of peace. In this connection, I would like to recall the inter-religious dialogue held in Niamey, Niger, on 22 and 23 November 2016. The dialogue was intended to provide the necessary tools and exchange platforms to forestall recurrent crises in our sub-region, as well as establish mechanisms for dialogue between communities, and ensure ownership of certain core values rooted in peace, tolerance and cohesion. Similarly, the conference



**Marcel de Souza welcomes the Chairman of ECOWAS Authority, President of Togo Faure Gnassingbe**

on the security situation in the Sahel and West Africa held from 12 to 14 October 2017 in Bamako, Mali, developed an integrated approach to resolving the crisis in the Sahel-Sahara region. In view of the continued security challenges, there is an urgent need to strengthen MINUSMA's mandate for peace enforcement and operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Force.

Concerning the Commission's support for the conduct of elections in the region, six (6) presidential elections were successfully held in 2016 and 2017. They include five (5) in 2016 in Niger, Benin, Cabo Verde, Gambia and Ghana, and one (1) in 2017 in Liberia.

In this respect, I would like to commend the leadership of political stakeholders in the sub-region who, on such occasions, shared the commitment to peace expressed by the citizens of these countries. I should also like to express my sincere appreciation to the eminent personalities who led, with both dexterity and diligence, ECOWAS Observer Missions deployed in these Member States during the elections.

#### ***Maritime Security***

With regard to maritime safety, efforts to operationalise the maritime security architecture are underway, including the process to operationalise the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC)



**Marcel de Souza in a group photograph with ECOWAS Heads of State**



in Accra (Zone F) and the one in Praia (Zone G), in addition to the one already established in Cotonou.

Concerning the ECOWAS Regional Maritime Coordination Centre (CRESMAC) based in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, Member States adopted the texts to allow the deployment of staff from Member States. This is a key step in the operationalisation of the Centre.

With respect to the Inter-regional Maritime Coordination Centre (ICC) based in Yaounde, Cameroon, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and ECOWAS agreed to hold a roundtable on funding the Centre in the first quarter of 2018.

### **Cooperation and Information Sharing among Security Services**

As part of efforts to enhance cooperation and information sharing among security services in the fight against cross-border organised crime, the Commission launched the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) in 2017, with financial support from the European Union and technical partnership of Interpol.

Based in Abidjan, the WAPIS Programme aims at building the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat cross-border crime and terrorism through enhanced information-sharing.

The WAPIS Programme will carry out, in particu-



**President de Souza with Nigeria Minister of Interior, Lt Gen. AB Danbazu**

lar, the digitisation and centralisation of police information in all countries, creation and operationalisation of a regional electronic platform for exchange of information among security services of Member States, development and establishment of an Automated Fingerprint Identification System.



**Marcel de Souza with the peace keeping sol-**

### **Early Warning and Rapid Response Mechanism**

One of the major achievements in the area of Early Warning was the transformation of Early Warning into an instrument of human security, including monitoring of food, health, politics, and natural disaster with support from partners.

Previously, the early warning programme was mainly geared towards prevention of political and social crises in Member States. The programme was transformed into an instrument of human security and it is currently focused on food, health, natural disasters, etc.

In view of ECOWAS' weak health system, there are plans to establish six (6) imaging reference centres, expected to provide an early warning system to contain or limit the effects of epidemics such as Zika Fever, Lassa Fever, Cholera, Ebola, etc.

### **Harmonisation of macroeconomic policies and monetary integration**

As part of the implementation of the ECOWAS Monetary Cooperation Programme, the Commission continued to implement the activities contained in the roadmap for the creation of the single currency, through the organisation of Convergence Council meetings in December 2016 and September 2017 in Abuja and Bama-





**Marcel de Souza, President of ECOWAS Commission**

ko respectively, as well as meetings of the Presidential Task Force on the currency single programme.

Following the 4th meeting of the Presidential Task Force on the ECOWAS Single Currency Programme, held on 24 October 2017 in Niamey, Niger, which reviewed the progress made within the framework of the ECOWAS initiative for the creation of a single currency by 2020 and obstacles encountered, the 5th meeting was held in Accra, Ghana on 21 February 2018. The conclusions of the meetings made it possible to define the actions required for the achievement of this important programme by 2020.

On monitoring of Member States' economic performance and harmonisation of statistics, the activities undertaken led to an enhanced cooperation between the relevant institutions and set out a new cooperation platform. The case for the production of a single convergence report for the entire ECOWAS region was thus adopted.

***Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services and Private Sector Development***

With regard to free movement of persons and goods, I took actions, immediately I assumed office, to remove obstacles to free movement of people, goods and services in our Community. The major activities undertaken are as follows:

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECOWAS TRADE LIBERALISATION SCHEME**

During the period under review, the Task Force on the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, set up by ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, became operational and was able to field advocacy missions to thirteen (13) Member States. It observed that obstacles to free movement and right of residence and establishment persist in Member States. It therefore proposed strong measures to political authorities to remove these obstacles as soon as possible.

Furthermore, awareness and advocacy activities were carried out through the production of a short hidden-camera film entitled "ECOWAS Taxi". The short film focused on harassment along borders and on roads in Member States. In addition, the Commission provided funding for the film "Borders", produced by a Community citizen, who won an award at FESPACO 2017. "ECOWAS Taxi" and "Borders" highlight practices contrary to the rules and principles adopted by Member States of the Community.

It should be pointed out that during periodic meetings with ECOWAS Member States' Ambassadors accredited to the Commission, I consistently emphasized the need for all Member States to ratify



**Marcel de Souza, Vice President, Edward Singhatay; in a group photograph with Heads of Central Bank of ECOWAS Member States**





the various Protocols relating to free movement of persons and goods and right of residence and establishment. More specifically, I carried out actions in support of Cabo Verde to ensure that this founding ECOWAS Member State, sees itself as an integral part of the region. In that regard, the parties mutually agreed to open diplomatic missions in Abuja and Praia.

### **Implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff**

To assist Member States in the implementation of the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (ECOWAS CET), which entered into force on 1 January 2015, necessary support was provided to the two countries (Cabo Verde and Sierra Leone) that had technical challenges. Furthermore, strong measures were taken to ensure the smooth implementation of the Common External Tariff and adoption of the Community Customs Code.

### **Adoption of the ECOWAS Customs Code**

The objective of the ECOWAS Customs Code is to ensure harmonisation of customs legislation and operations in the region, and facilitate trade in accordance with the requirements for the smooth functioning of a customs union.

The Customs Code was reviewed and adopted at the meeting of Member States' Finance Ministers held in Abuja, Nigeria on 24 November 2017. The Customs Code will be complemented by a manual of procedures to ensure its proper implementation by Member States.

### **Association Agreement with Mauritania**

Following the decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, taken in 2014 in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, instructing the President of the Commission to negotiate an association agreement between ECOWAS and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, an association agreement was concluded with Mauritania on 5 May 2017. The agreement was approved by the Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and signed by all parties. The maiden meeting of the Association Council, which convenes every six months, was held on 27 October 2017 in Nouakchott. The association agreement provides for Mauritania re-joining the customs union on 1 January 2019. This marks a gradual return of Mauritania, a founding ECOWAS Member State, to the regional body.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Community Development Programme**

For several years now, the Community Development Programme (CDP) has been at a standstill with no clear vision. Consequently, I provided fresh impetus and new direction to the CDP. From 230 projects, I had to streamline the programme to focus on seven major integration projects in the area of transport infrastructure (road, rail, maritime), energy, agriculture and health. The roundtable slated for Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire on 24 and 25 January 2018, was postponed due to the host country's



**Marcel de Souza laying the foundation for a regional infrastructure**



busy schedule.

One of the key projects of the CDP is the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Highway expected to transport 70% of the region's goods. Considering the significant impact the project would have on the current poor rate of regional integration (13% to 15%), actions undertaken resulted in the mobilisation of nearly US\$23 million for feasibility study. The funding comprises US\$9 million from the African Development Bank (AfDB), EUR9 million from the European Union, and US\$1 million contribution from each of the five Member States along the corridor. The project, whose Steering Committee was reconstituted, is expected to be carried out through public-private partnership.

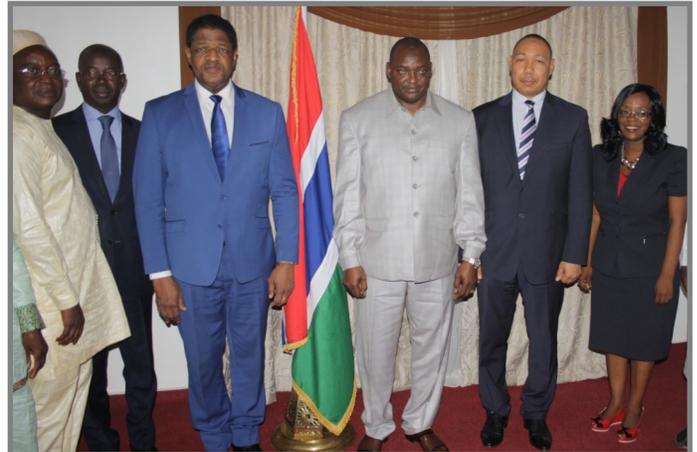
***Construction of a new Commission Headquarters with financial support and assistance of China and provision of a one-hectare plot of land by the Togolese Government for the construction of an ECOWAS House***

Plans are far advanced for the construction of a new Commission headquarters in Abuja through financial support and assistance of China, in particular the architectural design and initial technical feasibility studies. The intended objective is to bring together in one location all the Commission Departments, currently spread over three (3) different sites, in a bid to cut current costs of renting, and ensure more efficient coordination of activities.

In Togo, the Government has provided ECOWAS



**Marcel de Souza with the Chinese delegation after signing the agreement for the new Commission Headquarters**



**Marcel de Souza with The Gambian President Adama Barrow**

with a one-hectare plot of land for the construction of an ECOWAS House in Lome. The idea is to bring together in a single location the different ECOWAS Agencies based in Togo, and thus cut costs of renting.

***Community Sealink Project in conjunction with the Private Sector***

The Sealink project, initiated in partnership with the private sector including the Federation of West Africa Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI), will serve 12 ECOWAS coastlines and particularly open up Cabo Verde

***Agriculture and Food Security***

On food security, the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) took measures to beef up food security reserves.

Discussions have been initiated with the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) within the framework of the implementation of a production project, in countries where arable land is available, for grain stocks to address the shortage that occurs every two (2) or three (3) years in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This project will strengthen the early warning and rapid response mechanism.

Initiatives have also been undertaken with partner countries to build the capacity of agricultural experts and draw on these countries' proven expertise in agriculture.



## **II.2- DEVELOPMENTS IN PROVISION OF SERVICES AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT**



### ***Debt repayment and enhancement of the Commission's solvency, credibility and corporate image***

When I took office, I found out that the Commission owed over 200 service providers an accumulated debt of about US\$ 4,847,503.38, or UA 3,474,496.87 as at 8 April 2016 for various services (goods/work/consultancy)

Faced with this outstanding debt situation, which affects the credibility and corporate image of the Commission, I set up a Committee comprising the Directors of General Administration (Chair), of Finance and of Legal Affairs, the Office of the Financial Controller and the Chief Internal Auditor to determine the reasons for these late payments and make recommendations to address them urgently.

Following the completion of the tasks assigned to the Committee, all outstanding and subsequent payments had been made to suppliers, with the exception of those for which relevant supporting documents had not been submitted to the Commission for processing.

The payment of outstanding debts restored the Commission's corporate image and gave confidence to service providers who are once again keen on working with the Commission. Furthermore, the Commission is now in a position to work in optimum conditions to carry out the mandate assigned to it by the Community. It is

also able to provide a sound cash flow position.

### ***Introduction of staff attendance control system and mandatory mission report***

I have observed a number of unjustified absence from work and lack of feedback on missions carried out by Commission staff. Consequently, I introduced an automated attendance reporting software. The system is designed to make deductions on monthly salaries for absence and unjustified lateness. In addition, staff were directed to submit mission reports to enable management properly monitor projects involving the Commission.

### ***Provision of equipment and working tools to staff***

Efforts have been made over the past two years to provide various types of equipment to staff. Thus, a large number of office equipment, computers and office furniture procured between 2015 and 2017 were purchased in 2017, representing, in most cases, between 50% and 100% of supplies for the period 2015-2017.

### ***Enhanced staff training and development***

Over 290 staff members underwent various capacity building programmes between January 2017 and February 2018. This has improved staff performance.

### ***Development of a transparent and predictable career management system for staff***

In 2017, I introduced a Talent Management system, a new tool that will better manage staff careers with utmost transparency and objectivity. This system, expected

to be implemented in the second half of 2018, will be linked to ECOLINK, a new budgetary and financial management system designed to ensure greater transparency in operations.



**Members of ECOWAS Commission staff**



### ***Promotion of 26 Staff Members***

In 2017, I convened the Committees on Promotion and Confirmation to review staff administrative situation, in particular with regard to staff who should have benefited from these measures several years ago. Following the exercise, I approved the promotion of 26 staff members and confirmation of 12 other officers.

### ***Recruitment of over sixty staff for the Community***

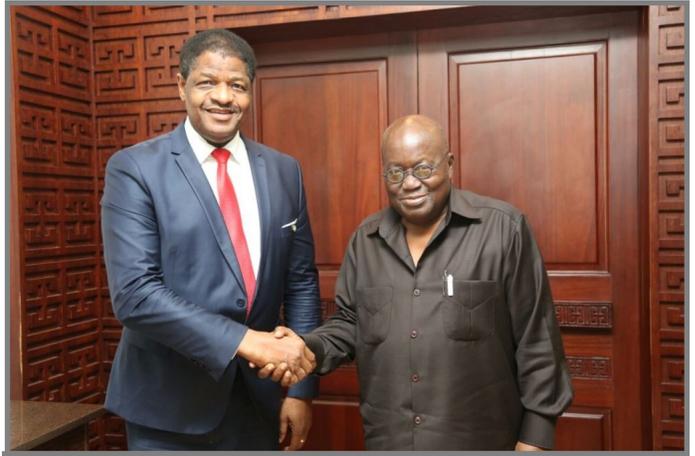
In order to provide the Community with the needed human capital to carry out its tasks, over sixty staff were recruited. They were mainly contract staff, with the exception of staff of the Regional Centre for Disease Surveillance and Control, inaugurated on 21 February 2018 and headquartered in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

### ***Adoption and implementation of the Code of Ethics to ensure proper functioning of the Community***

During my tenure, I was astonished to find out that there was no Code of Ethics in ECOWAS. This encouraged acts of corruption and misappropriation, as was the case in 2017. I therefore set up a Committee to prepare and submit a draft Code of Ethics. The draft Code was subsequently reviewed by Management of the Commission and other Institutions prior to its adoption and endorsement by the Council of Ministers in June 2017 in Monrovia, Republic of Liberia.

### ***Settlement of disputes between the Commission and Staff***

A number of serving staff or staff whose contracts are coming to an end have filed complaints or brought cases against the Commission before the Court of Justice, either for non-payment of entitlements or for failure to comply with terms of contracts between them and the Commission. In order to put an end to this situation, I formed a Task Force responsible for making proposals to enable the affected staff receive their entitlements. The Task Force



**A hand shake between the President of Ghana, Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo with Marcel de Souza**

made recommendations that I approved. These recommendations led to the settlement of a number of disputes pending for several years.

### ***Launch of the project for the transformation of the Community Computer Centre (CCC) into a Training School for Community Staff and Member States' Experts, with assistance from BADEA***

In order to enhance the capacity of staff and Member States' experts, I fielded a mission to the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), which undertook to finance the study on the transformation of the Community Computer Centre (CCC) into a Staff Training School. The Commission's Management reviewed the study submitted by the Consultant, and made a number of recommendations for the finalization of the draft document.

### ***Results-Based Management***

How do we improve project and programme implementation? This can be achieved by introducing a Results-Based Management system. It is with this in mind that I contacted the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Together with the OECD, we have developed a EUR 4 million programme for which discussions on funding are far advanced with the European Union.

The use of dashboards with relevant performance indicators would lead to progress in the attainment of economic integration goals. We therefore need to take steps to remove the obstacles which have hitherto hindered intra-Community trade, hovering between 13% and 15%, 43 years after the establishment of our Organisation.





### ***Cost containment measures and improved efficiency***

Cost containment measures and improved efficiency yielded positive results. While cost control measures have had varying effects on the different expenditure items, overall expenditure declined by 48.5% between 2015 and 2017.

On energy in particular, I put in place a Committee which identified all sources of waste and over-consumption. Following the Committee's recommendations, the Commission began to streamline energy consumption through the use of automatic change-over switches to provide relays for generators in the event of power outage. This put an end to the practice of systematically running generators, despite power supply from the national electricity grid.

Other arrangements are also being made to obtain a low-cost supply licence from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, and to secure a dedicated power line from the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC).

### ***Reduction in costs related to staff and asset insurance***

It was observed that significant amounts are being paid for insurance premiums without up-to-date policies to support the expenses. In addition, individuals who are no longer Commission staff or even deceased were still on the list of persons eligible for insurance cover. In order to update and streamline costs, on the one hand, and to introduce a better insurance premium management practice, on the other, a seasoned Consultant was engaged. His initial findings show that a margin of at least 30% reduction in costs is possible. The conclusions of his work are expected in due course.

## **CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

### ***Lack of Community spirit in the region***

The lack of Community spirit among Member States is very obvious and constitutes a barrier to integration and solidarity. It is therefore necessary to rebuild this spirit and ensure that regional policies are adopted and that national laws align with Community policies. Similarly, political interference has a significant impact on the Commission's efficiency, in particular with regard to purely internal management decisions.

### ***Delay in remittance of Community Levy***

Member States should continue to be sensitised on the importance of the Community Levy for programme implementation. However, cases of wasted resources and mismanagement should be discouraged in the strictest terms.

### ***Non-compliance with decisions of the Court of Justice***

Judgements of the Community Court of Justice are neither complied with nor enforced. There is a need for in-depth reflection on the issue. It is recommended that sanctions should be considered as ultimate measures for the smooth functioning of the Community.

### ***No solution to the political crisis in Guinea Bissau***

ECOWAS is very active in Guinea-Bissau and should continue its efforts for the resolution of the political crisis. The key to resolving the impasse is the implementation of the Bissau and Conakry Agreements. Sanctions imposed recently by the Authority of Heads of State and Government constitute a means of exerting pressure to end the crisis. It should be pointed out that the cost of maintaining ECOWAS troops in the country is a huge burden for the Community. A speedy resolution of the crisis is therefore strongly encouraged to mitigate the risks of destabilization throughout the sub-region.





**Need for enhanced regional integration**

With a view to consolidating Community spirit and encouraging people's commitment to Community life, it is recommended that each Member State should provide a land for the construction of an ECOWAS House.

Efforts being made to transform the radio provided by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) into an ECOWAS Communications Agency should be sustained.

"Living Together" and inter-religious dialogue are major concerns to be addressed through communication.

**Consolidation of gains made in staff management and cost-cutting measures**

Ethics Committees provided for in the adopted Code of Ethics should be set up in all ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies. In addition, it is essential to maintain the drive with regard to staff mobility and capacity building in order to improve efficiency on the job. Furthermore, the cost containment measures in the Commission should be pursued without undermining project and programme



efficiency.

**CONCLUSION**

My tenure as President of ECOWAS Commission has given me an insight into the magnitude of challenges still ahead of us in building Community spirit in ECOWAS.

It is thus crucial that every stakeholder, regardless of his or her position within our institutions, should be conscious of the need to put Community interests above personal considerations.

The ratification and application of the existing fifty-four (54) Protocols is a challenge for all Member States. There is the need to disseminate them and develop manuals of procedures to raise awareness among the various stakeholders.

Together we shall build a stronger ECOWAS of People, capable of meeting the needs for economic development and the fight against poverty among the 350 million people living in the region.



**Marcel de Souza with 1<sup>st</sup> ladies of ECOWAS at the forum in Niamey**

