

ECOWAS as Regional Peace Broker

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1. Introduction

The idea for a West African community goes back to President William Tubman of Liberia, who made the call in 1964. A subsequent agreement was signed between Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in February 1965, but without any effect. In April 1972, General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo re-launched the idea, made up draft proposals and toured 12 countries, from July to August 1973 asking support for their plan. A meeting was convened at Lomé from 10th-15th December 1973 to study a draft treaty. This treaty was then examined during a meeting of experts and jurists in Accra in January 1974, as well as by a ministerial meeting in Monrovia in January 1975. All this led to the signature of the treaty for an Economic Community of West African States (Treaty of Lagos) on 28th May 1975 by 15 West African countries. The protocols launching ECOWAS were signed in Lomé, Togo on 5th November 1976.

A revised ECOWAS Treaty designed to accelerate economic integration and to increase political co-operation, was signed in July 1993. ECOWAS has then been designated one of the five regional pillars of the African Economic Community (AEC). It signed in February 1998 the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and RECs (Regional Economic Communities) together with COMESA (Common Market for East and Southern Africa), ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States), IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) and SADC (Southern African Development Community).

2. Member States

The Member States are:

Benin	Ghana	Niger
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Nigeria
Cape Verde	Guinea-Bissau	Senegal
Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
The Gambia	Mali	Togo



Source: Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria

3. Objectives

ECOWAS aims to promote co-operation and integration in economic, social and cultural activity, ultimately leading to the establishment of an economic and monetary union through the total integration of the national economies of member states. It also aims to raise the living standards of its peoples, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to the progress and development of the African Continent. ECOWAS integration policies and programmes are influenced by the prevailing economic conditions in its

Member States, the need to take the principal provisions of the AEC Treaty (Abuja June 1991) into account, and relevant developments on the international scene.

The revised treaty of 1993, which was to extend economic and political co-operation among member states, designates the achievement of a common market and a single currency as economic objectives. In the political sphere it provides for a West African parliament, an economic and social council and an ECOWAS court of justice to replace the existing Tribunal and enforce Community decisions. The treaty also formally assigned the Community with the responsibility of preventing and settling regional conflicts.

4. The Institutions

The Community consists of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, the Community Court of Justice, the ECOWAS Parliament, the Executive Secretariat and six Specialised Technical Commissions. The ECOWAS Treaty also makes provision for an Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with an advisory role, to be composed of representatives of the various categories of economic and social activity. This body is yet to be established.



Source: Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze/ZIF-Berlin

4.1. Authority of Heads of State and Government

The Authority of Heads of State and Government of Member States is the supreme institution of the Community and is composed of Heads of State and Governments of Member States. The Authority is responsible for the general direction and control of the Community and takes all measures to ensure its progressive development and the realisation of its objectives. It delegates its powers to the Mediation and Security Council regarding peace and security matters.

The Authority meets at least once a year in ordinary session. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of the Authority or at

the request of a Member State, provided that such a request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The office of the Chairman is held every year by a Member State elected by the Authority.

4.2. Council of Ministers

The Council comprises of the Minister in charge of ECOWAS Affairs and any other designated Minister of each Member State. It is responsible for the functioning and development of the Community. The Council meets at least twice a year in ordinary session. One of such sessions immediately proceeds the ordinary session of the Authority. An extraordinary session may be convened by the Chairman of Council or at the request of a Member State, provided that such request is supported by a simple majority of the Member States. The office of Chairman of Council is held by the Minister responsible for ECOWAS Affairs of the Member State elected as Chairman of the Authority of Heads of States and Government.

4.3. Court of Justice

The ECOWAS treaty in October 1999, decided to establish a Court of Justice following a two days meeting of Justice Ministers in Abuja. Its composition and competence are determined by the Conference of Heads of State and Government.

The Court interprets the provisions of the treaty and settles disputes between member states that are referred to it. It shall address complaints from member states and institutions of ECOWAS, as well as issues relating to defaulting nations. The court has a president, a chief registrar and seven judges: It is a permanent institution. Draft rules of procedures for the Court are being finalised.

4.4. Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretariat is responsible for the smooth functioning of the Community and for the implementation of the decisions of the Authority. The Secretariat's headquarters are in Abuja, Nigeria. The Executive Secretary is elected for a four year term. This position is currently held by Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas. The Executive Secretary has four deputies, responsible for:

- (1) Political Affairs, Defence and Security (position currently held by General Cheick Oumar Diarra.) – Dept. of Political Affairs, Defence and Security;
- (2) Integration – Depts of Agriculture and Environment, Trade and Industry, Human Development, and the Community Computer Centre;
- (3) Policies Harmonisation – Depts. of Economic Policy and Trade and Customs Policy; and
- (4) Administration and Finance – Depts of Administration and Finance.

4.5. Specialised Commissions

The following Technical Commissions are established within the Economic Community of West African States:

- Food and Agriculture;
- Industry, Science, Technology and Energy;
- Environment and Natural Resources;
- Transport, Communications and Tourism;
- Trade, Customs, Taxation, Statistics, Money and Payments;
- Political, Judicial and Legal Affairs, Regional Security and Immigration;
- Human Resources, Information, Social and Cultural Affairs; and
- Administration and Finance Commission.

The Authority may, whenever it deems appropriate, restructure the existing Commissions or establish new Commissions. Each commission shall

comprise representatives of each Member State. Each Commission may, when necessary, set up subsidiary commissions to assist it in carrying out its work. It shall determine the composition of any such subsidiary commission.

4.6. ECOWAS Parliament

The ECOWAS Parliament convened in May 2002, with 115 Members of Parliament representing all the member states except Côte d'Ivoire. Togo, Liberia, Cape Verde, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Republic of Benin, the Gambia and Sierra Leone have 5 Parliamentarians each; Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal have 6 Parliamentarians each; Côte d'Ivoire is entitled to 7 representatives; Ghana has 8 and Nigeria has 35.

Membership is constituted from the membership of the National Parliaments of each Member State. Should a Member lose his/her seat in the National Parliament, he/she will also lose his/her seat in the Regional Parliament. The ECOWAS Parliament is situated in Abuja, Nigeria. It acts at present only in a consultative and advisory capacity. Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Professor Ali Nouhoum Diallo, has expressed the intention of the Parliament to acquire legislative powers in the future, as well as to institute directly elected representatives.

4.7. Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security

The ECOWAS Summit of December 1999 agreed on a Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security.

5. Regional Co-operation on Peace and Security Matters

The West African leaders had recognised by the late 1970s that they needed to pool their resources to address the various internal security problems in their respective countries – problems that often overflowed to their neighbours. They soon realised that the case of economic development and progress can only be pursued in an environment of peace and stability. They realised early enough that the success of an insurgent or revolutionary movement in one country is bound to spread to others. So they decided that ECOWAS had to involve itself in conflicts of Member States to ensure that an environment conducive to the implementation of its economic programmes was maintained. Consequently, they signed a Protocol Relating to Non- Aggression (PNA) in Lagos, Nigeria 22nd April 1978 which enjoined Member States to refrain from the threat and use of force or aggression against one another. Article 5(2) of the PNA stated that “Any dispute which cannot be settled peacefully among Member States shall be referred to a Committee of the Authority of Heads of State and Government.”

However, this Non-Aggression Treaty failed to address the issue of the various insurgent movements that were threatening most of the regimes internally. A subsequent Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (PMAD) was signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 29th May 1981 and became effective five years later. The Protocol provides for a non-standing military force to be used to render mutual military aid and assistance to a member state that fall victim to external aggression.

The actual purpose of the Protocol is therefore evident in Article 4(b). This provides for a collective response where a member state is a victim of internal armed conflict that is engineered and supported actively from outside, and which is likely to endanger the peace and security of other Member States. Both these Protocols have been subsumed as part of the new ECOWAS Mechanism.

There have been subsequent security-related agreements, which include: the ECOWAS Conventions on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters

and on Extradition signed in Dakar on 29th July 1992 and in Abuja on 6th August 1994; The Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons, adopted by the ECOWAS Heads of State during a meeting in Abuja on 30th-31st October 1998 and the Programme for the Co-ordination of Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), held in Bamako on 24th March 1999. Another meeting was held in Abuja on 9th July 2001, when the Authority of Head of States and Government extended the moratorium for another 3 years.

The ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles in 1991 sets out member states' commitment to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This was taken further in December 2001, with declarations on Child Rights and Human Trafficking, and most importantly, the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which addresses root causes of conflict, such as corruption and instability. This is a supplementary protocol to the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, and deals with issues such as free, fair elections, civilian control of the military and unconstitutional changes of government.

Plans for the establishment of a regional criminal investigation and intelligence bureau were considered at meetings of the ECOWAS Police Chiefs on 23rd September 2002 and the Interior Ministers on 26th September 2002 as part of efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities.

5.1. The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security

In July 1991, while endorsing the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the Authority adopted a Declaration of Political Principle to Promote Mutual Collaboration in Defence and Security Issues. A subsequent extraordinary ECOWAS summit in December 1997 in Togo endorsed the concept of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security. This was followed by the Yamoussoukro meeting of Ministers of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs during March 1998, and a min-

isterial and experts meeting held in Banjul during July 1998. The Protocol establishing the Mechanism was finally adopted by the ECOWAS Authority at the Abuja summit in August 1999 and sought to institutionalise structures and processes that would ensure consultations and collective management of regional security issues.

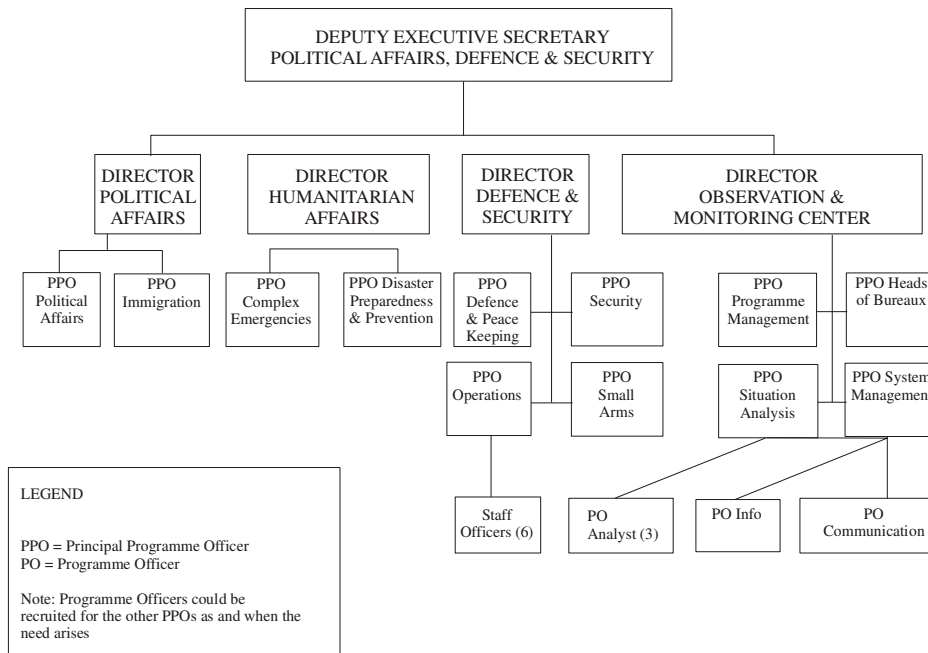
5.1.1. The Authority of Head of States and Government

The Authority of Heads of State and Government is the highest decision-making body of the Mechanism but, without prejudice, has delegated its powers in terms of Article 7 of the Treaty to the Mediation and Security Council, an innovative approach yet to be copied by other Sub-Regions.

5.1.2. The Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretary has the power to initiate fact-finding, mediation, facilitation, negotiations and reconciliation actions in the effective prevention and management of conflicts in the Sub-Region. In terms of Article 30 of the Protocol of August 1999 in Abuja, the Executive Secretary is responsible for the training and preparation of composite standby units through regional peacekeeping training centres. The office of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security supervises the Departments of Political Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs, Defence and Security, as well as the Department of the Mission Management and Planning Cell.

**Organogram of the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary:
Political Affairs, Defence and Security**



Source: Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria

5.1.3. Mediation and Security Council

This Council decides on all matters relating to peace and security on behalf of the Authority of Heads of State and Governments. It is composed of nine Member States seven of which are elected by the Authority. There are an additional two Members, namely the current chairman and the immediate past chairman of the Authority. Decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority.

The Mediation and Security Council was officially launched in Monrovia during May 2000. The meeting, which marked the first ordinary session of the council, followed two special sessions held in Bamako,

Mali and discussed the transfer of power of the different ECOWAS mediation committees to the Council. The Council serves as the equivalent to the UN Security Council at Sub-Regional level and meets at Ambassadorial, Ministerial and Head of State and Government level. The current ten members are Ministers of the following Member States: Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo.

The Committee of Ambassadors of the ten elected Member States of the Council meet each month to review issues of peace and security. The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Internal Affairs and Security meet at least every 3 months to review the general political and security situation in the Sub-Region.

The ten Member Heads of State of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council meet at least twice a year and have the authority to make final decisions on the appropriate measures, policies, and mandates to be taken with regard to situations under consideration with a two-thirds majority vote of the members present.

The Mediation and Security Council oversees the activities of the following organs:

- (1) Defence and Security Commission;
- (2) Council of Elders;
- (3) Early Warning Observation and Monitoring Centre;
- (4) ECOMOG (ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group is a non-standing military force consisting of land, sea and air components).

The Council can authorise all forms of intervention, including the decision to deploy political and military missions, to inform the UN and the AU of its decisions, to provide and review mandates and terms of reference, and to appoint force commanders.

5.1.3.1. Defence and Security Commission

The Defence and Security Commission comprises Chiefs of Defence Staff of ECOWAS. The Commission's role is to examine all technical and administrative issues and assess logistical requirements for peace-keeping operations. The Commission assists the Mediation and Security Council in:

- a) formulating the mandate of the Peace-keeping Force;
- b) defining the terms of reference for the Force;
- c) appointing the Force Commander;
- d) determining the composition of the Contingents.

The Defence and Security Commission meet once every three months and whenever necessary. It also examines reports from the Observation and Monitoring Centres and makes recommendations to the Mediation and Security Council.

5.1.3.2. Council of Elders

The Council of Elders is appointed by the Executive Secretary to engage in preventative diplomacy in the region. It is composed of eminent personalities chosen to use their good offices and experience to play the role of mediators, conciliators and facilitators. The first Council of Elders was inaugurated in July 2001 in Niamey, Niger and counts election monitoring in The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Togo as well as Zimbabwe among its achievements. This Council was constituted as a 32-Member Organ drawn from the ten Members of the Mediation and Security Council. At the Dakar Summit in January 2003, the Council of Elders was recomposed as a 15-Member Body, one from each ECOWAS Member State. On 23rd April 2003, a new Council of Elders was inaugurated in Accra, Ghana. At their first meeting the new Council recommended that exploratory or preliminary missions in certain conflict situations be carried by the Elders before the intervention of the Heads of State.

The current members are:

1. Mrs Bernadine Do-Rego (Benin)
2. Bishop Anselme T. Sanou (Burkina Faso)
3. Mr Antonio Mascarenha Monterio (Cape Verde)
4. Justice Onlai Siene (Côte d'Ivoire)
5. Mr Eric Tunde Janneh (The Gambia)
6. Mr E.M. Debrah (Ghana)
7. Mr Abdourahmane Sow (Guinea)
8. Mr Pedro Gadinaho Gomez (Guinea Bissau)
9. Mr Ernest Eastman (Liberia)
10. Mrs Sira Diop (Mali)
11. Mr Amirou Sidikou (Niger)
12. General Yakubu Gowon (Nigeria)
13. Position unfilled? (Senegal)
14. Justice Desmond Luke (Sierra Leone)
15. Mr Bitopoku Yagnaninim (Togo)

5.1.3.3. Early Warning Observation and Monitoring System

The Observation and Monitoring Centre is the hub of the ECOWAS Early Warning System that has four Observation and Monitoring Zones within the Sub-Region. It has recently appointed a director and a programme manager responsible for early warning analysis. During May 2001 ECOWAS signed a headquarters agreement with Benin to establish an observation zone in Cotonou whose role is to signal the potential of conflicts in Benin, Nigeria and Togo. This is the fourth zone. The others are in Banjul (Gambia), Monrovia (Liberia), and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). Their function is to collect data on potential disputes for transmission to the central ECOWAS observatory in Abuja.

5.1.3.4. ECOMOG

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is a non-standing military force consisting of land, sea and air components that were set up by the Member States to deal with the security problem that followed the collapse of the formal

state structure in the Republic of Liberia in 1990. It is a military force formed by ECOWAS Member States from units of their national armed forces. With its fifteen member states ECOWAS has a total population estimated at some 216, 2 million people. The official languages of member states are English, French, and Portuguese.

The command structure of ECOMOG is quite simple. At the top is the force commander and below him the deputy force commanders, who are also the contingent commanders of their countries' troops. The force commander operates a small planning staff headed by a chief of staff, who deals with common problems and co-ordinates the activities of the various contingents in close co-operation with his deputies.

The central planning staff, under the directive of the force commander, usually designates various sectors of the mission area to the respective contingent commanders. It takes into consideration their strength, the instructions from their home governments, their affinity to the host country and the level of their equipment, arms and ammunition.

5.1.3.4.1. Intervention

The ECOWAS regional mechanism for conflict resolution provides a framework for regional intervention in political crises in member states with ECOMOG as the adopted regional intervention force. During the 1990s ECOWAS activities were increasingly dominated by its efforts to secure peace in Liberia. The involvement of ECOMOG was to prevent the overthrow of the unpopular government of President Samuel Doe by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor. Doe called on the Community for help. His request split the Community. On 7th August 1990, since government structure had seemingly disappeared in Liberia, the Anglophone countries under the auspices of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee met in Banjul, The Gambia, and took a decision to send a military force to intervene in the conflict in Liberia. The Francophone members of the Community, with the exception of Guinea (the only Francophone member of the Standing Mediation Committee), were opposed to the military intervention.

The intervention force, which was dispatched in Liberia on 24th August 1990, consisted of troops contributed by Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The force was placed under the command of a Ghanaian general, while the bulk of the land and naval forces and the entire air force were contributed by Nigeria. The force was given the mandate to restore law and order in Liberia, to create an environment that will allow humanitarian operations, and to secure a peaceful atmosphere that will facilitate cease-fire negotiations. There is considerable evidence that the US supported the initiative of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee. It is also important to note at this stage that the initial troop-contributing countries were all members of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee. At a later stage, Senegal, as a result of Nigeria's persuasion, contributed troops. However, the Senegalese withdrew their contingent after it had suffered five casualties and constant harassment, including being taken hostage by combatants of National Patriotic Front of Liberia. Successive fighting, looting and killing were temporarily halted by a number of short-lived peace accords until the fourteenth peace accord was signed in Abuja in August 1996.

5.1.3.4.2. Peace Enforcement

ECOMOG intervention operations have forced armed groups to accept negotiations that, in most cases, led to a cease-fire. ECOMOG is normally asked to monitor and enforce the provisions of the cease-fire. The ECOWAS Secretariat is kept informed at all stages.

Since the factions who signed the cease-fire agreements do not do so in good faith, violations are to be taken into consideration. This compels ECOMOG to use force to get the recalcitrant parties to adhere to what was agreed upon. This will sometimes involve large-scale military operations against the most belligerent insurgent group or groups. ECOMOG missions, at this stage, change from intervention to peace enforcement. This compels armed groups to realise that they cannot achieve their political objectives by military action. It takes appreciable time for armed groups to realise that. In the period that ECOMOG is engaged in military action to force them to such a position, extensive logistic support and troop reinforcement is required. This is because the

groups which it is fighting against are not conventional armies, and their strategy is to bring intolerable hardship on the civilian population in order to make ECOMOG and the legal authority it supports unpopular.

5.1.3.4.3. Peace Keeping

ECOMOG peacekeeping missions normally start off on a very difficult footing. It takes considerable effort, time and diplomacy to persuade the parties that fought ECOMOG that the force is now neutral. However, ECOMOG has successfully overcome these difficulties and can rapidly transform itself from a fighting force to a peacekeeping force that enjoys the confidence and respect of the very insurgents it was fighting. The key to this success is because ECOMOG has always enjoyed the trust and confidence of the civil population. In many instances, it has intervened when general anarchy has set in, and has saved the civilian population from the violence of fighting groups. ECOMOG is therefore perceived as a liberator by the larger part of society.

ECOMOG oversaw the subsequent elections on 19th July 1997 that brought Taylor to power in a landslide victory. The force successfully restored an atmosphere that permitted the reinstatement of a functional state structure in Liberia. ECOMOG left Liberia in February 1998, having earned grudging respect for its role the following years.

Renewed crisis in Liberia during 2003 led to ECOWAS deploying a second peacekeeping operation in the region, after a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was reached on 18th August 2003. The ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) began deploying outside Monrovia from 9th September 2003, with 3 563 troops from Nigeria, Mali and Senegal under Force Commander, Brigadier General Festus Okonkwo. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved conversion of ECOMIL into a UN International Stabilisation Force from 1st October 2003, known as UNMIL.

5.1.3.4.4. Neighbouring Countries

The violence shown by the operations in Liberia of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia were echoed by those of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under Foday Sankoh in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The Revolutionary United Front operations started in March 1991. In 1994 the Sierra Leone and Nigerian governments signed a defence pact and ECOWAS soon extended the mandate of ECOMOG in Liberia to include Sierra Leone, and moved its headquarters from Monrovia to Freetown. A cease-fire between the government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front eventually came into effect on 24th May 1998, followed by negotiations and a peace deal on 7th July 1999. ECOMOG had to reinforce its troops to almost 15 000 before the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), started taking over in accordance with the Lomé Accords.

ECOMOG has played a lesser role in Guinea-Bissau where President Vieira called on ECOMOG to intervene and help put down the rebellion in his country in 1998 led by the former Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Brigadier Ansumane Mané. The first ceasefire of 26th July 1998 led to a peace agreement signed on 1st November 1998 in Abuja, in which a 600 man ECOMOG force was required, to police the withdrawal of Guinean and Senegalese soldiers and to oversee elections. When President Kumba Yala was ousted by a coup d'état on 14th September 2003, Guinea-Bissau was threatened with expulsion from ECOWAS in terms of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy and the African Union (AU) Algiers Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government.

The ECOWAS Foreign Ministers recommended, on 3rd March 1998 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, that ECOMOG formally become responsible for peacekeeping operations in West Africa and sought to provide a clearer command chain in the light of the often complex relationship between ECOMOG and ECOWAS. The Yamoussoukro decision reflected not only the reality of ECOMOG but served to recognise the dominant role of Nigeria, although the decision provided for the broadening of the troop contributions and a rotating Force Commander, as

opposed to predominantly Nigerian commanders. Although Nigeria has carried the lion's share of ECOMOG, with a civilian government in power since the end of May 1999, Nigerian President Obasanjo has made it clear that Nigeria could not continue to do so in the future.

Since September 2002, a military rebellion in Côte d'Ivoire has drawn ECOWAS into peacekeeping duties into the country. A meeting of the Mediation and Security Council of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security met on 26th October and approved the deployment of West African troops to monitor a ceasefire signed earlier on 17th October. The ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI) deployed approximately 1 400 troops from Ghana, Togo, Benin, Niger and Senegal under Force Commander, Major-General Abdoulaye Fall. On 28th February 2004, the UN Security Council voted in favour of integrating these West African peacekeepers into a UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), from 4th April 2004 for an initial period of 12 months. Some 4000 French troops operating in Côte d'Ivoire were expected to withdraw thereafter.

6. Conclusion

The restoration of constitutional governments in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the conclusion of the impending disarmament exercise will mark the end of the active deployment of ECOMOG. In accordance with the political framework under which the force operates, it shall be dissolved and the contingents will return to their respective countries. However, many observers are of the view that, while the contingents return home, ECOMOG headquarters should remain in a designated member state. They believe that this is necessary to consolidate the experience gained during the force's operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the other parts of the region.

Therefore the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission meeting in Abidjan from 14th -18th August 2002 approved a harmonised training programme for ECOMOG stand-by units, in three training schools in the

region. The three schools are: the Peacekeeping School in Zambakro, Côte d'Ivoire, the Kofi Annan International Training Centre in Accra, Ghana, and the National War College in Abuja, Nigeria. They shall respectively handle tactical, operational and strategic training programmes. It will then become compulsory for each Member State to have standby units, which will be inspected regularly by the Commission. Plans are also underway to set up two military bases for the storage of common user equipment, and other items recovered from past operations. These bases shall be established one in a coastal country and another in a landlocked country in the region. Proposals for the financing of ECOMOG peacekeeping deployments include the establishment of a Peace Fund similar to the one of the African Union.

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