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Lecture On

“The Role of the Economic Community of West African States in Achieving the Economic Integration of West Africa”

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

- Director of the Wilson Center,
- Esteemed Scholars, Researchers, Fellows and Students of Woodrow Wilson Center,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

President Woodrow Wilson was a remarkable President of the United States whose internalisation was to set a high benchmark for multilateral diplomacy. As an accomplished scholar, Woodrow Wilson emphasized policy-oriented research and saw academia in a mutually reinforcing partnership with policy making in the common enterprise to forge a government that delivers “justice, liberty and peace”. As a President, he was a champion of national reconciliation whose anti-corruption and anti-trust crusade in favour of the poor made this country more just and caring. A thorough pacifist and renowned world statesman, his reluctant entry into World War I had one goal – to end the war and launch world peace based on collective security, a task he brilliantly accomplished.

I therefore feel humbled, greatly honoured and privileged to be at this famous Center, a living reminder and symbol of the ideals that Woodrow Wilson stood for, to share my thoughts

with you on **the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in achieving the economic integration of West Africa**. The same ideals inspire the integration facilitating role of ECOWAS, the Organization that I have the privilege of heading, in fighting poverty, promoting good governance and peace, and harmoniously integrating a common West African space into the global economy. In so doing, I will be highlighting how ECOWAS is spearheading the capitalization of regional human, natural and material resources and the promotion of mutually-beneficial cooperation with external partners to supplement internal efforts in the quest for sustainable development and human security.

II. REGIONAL INTEGRATION: THE GENESIS

Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ECOWAS emerged on May 28 1975 at a time that the world, and Africa particularly, was going through a crisis in international economic relations, manifested in falling living standards in developing countries; over-dependence of Africa on the economies of the former colonial powers; limited space for manoeuvrability by the individual developing countries on the international scene; the paradox of sovereign equality of states and inequality in the ability to act. Its creation was spearheaded by a section of the sub-region's leadership at the time who found the argument for collective self-reliance in order to at least survive in the global system and engage in it meaningfully as persuasive and irresistible. With the assistance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa the UN had developed a rational framework for the creation of regional economic communities as a means of collective self-reliance for sustainable socio-economic development, and as building blocks of an African Economic Community. This greatly facilitated the emergence of ECOWAS.

The Organisation was armed with the vision of creating a single regional economic space as a prelude to the continental one, through integration and collective self-reliance; an economic space with a single market and single currency capable of generating accelerated socio-economic development and competing more meaningfully in the global market of large trade blocs and uneven patterns of trade between the industrialised North and raw material-based economies of the South.

The ECOWAS agenda was thus to promote market integration through policy harmonization and coordination; and to speed up the development of physical infrastructure i.e. roads, telecoms and energy to facilitate market integration. From the foregoing, it is clear that the main priority of ECOWAS as an Inter-Governmental Organization was the economic agenda. At the time, only a passing thought was given to the nexus between security and development. Indeed, the attempts then to address the issues of peace and security were informed by the realities of Cold War politics. Three years after its birth, ECOWAS adopted **the Protocol on Non-Aggression**, followed later in 1981 by **the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense**. Both protocols were designed primarily to address external threats and aggression, the rationale being that in an era of cold war power politics, the dynamics and nature of conflicts were limited to external threats. There is no doubt that ECOWAS has achieved a lot in

economic integration, and I will be addressing this issue shortly. However, the 1980s ushered in new global dynamics and local responses that threatened to derail the ECOWAS integration efforts.

III. REGIONAL INTEGRATION: THE FORCED SHIFTING OF PRIORITIES

New Threats to Integration

The easing of cold war tensions was accompanied by a dramatic spike in violent internal power struggles that threatened state implosion across Africa. It did not take long for ECOWAS to realise the changing nature of threats to stability. It became obvious that a nexus existed between internal conflicts, sparked largely by bad governance, identity crises and poor resource management on the one hand, and collective developmental efforts on the other. Barely a decade after the creation of ECOWAS, violent civil wars erupted in Liberia (1989) and Sierra Leone (1991) as a new phenomenon not confined to the borders of individual nation states, but with serious regional implications, both in their causes and effects. Starting off as internal struggles for power and control over resources, these conflicts soon took on a regionalized nature, fuelled by the illegal exploitation of natural resources for the acquisition of small arms and light weapons and characterized by the proliferation of private armies composed of mercenaries, dispossessed youths and bandits.

It quickly became clear that the mechanisms that were put in place to safeguard national sovereignty and ward off external aggression were grossly inadequate to meet the challenges of an increasingly interdependent region in which the ripples of internal dynamics were instantly felt far beyond national borders, in the form of refugee flows, disrupted infrastructure, the proliferation of weapons and the export of violence.

The ECOWAS Response

By the end of the 1980's, ECOWAS was compelled to reposition itself to deal with conflicts which threatened to engulf the entire region. It became imperative to create initially, ad-hoc mechanisms and thereafter, more permanent structures to address the compelling dynamics and nature of conflicts, which were propelled by domestic or internal factors such as the unequal burden of poverty on different sections of the community, bad governance, denial of human rights and the rule of law, exclusion, lack of probity and above all, a population explosion that had created a major youth crisis.

The regionalised 'internal' conflicts threatened to derail the original economic agenda of ECOWAS. Worse, the implosion of States in the sub-region coincided with the spread of global anarchy that followed the collapse of the former Soviet Union and most notably, the beginning of the First Gulf War. With the attention of the international community focused elsewhere, therefore, ECOWAS had to act locally to avert the looming disaster in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The new paradigm had to be based on a systemic search for conflict prevention and conflict management mechanisms. The military agenda, for a time, overshadowed the economic

agenda. The creation of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to intervene in Liberia and Sierra Leone was, therefore, an act of absolute necessity dictated by the unfolding realities.

However, the legal instruments and protocols in the possession of ECOWAS only anticipated interstate and not intrastate conflicts. For example, the existing protocols were clearly designed to prevent conflicts between Member States; nothing was in place for 'interference' in the internal affairs of member states. In the absence of an enabling legal framework for intervention there was division amongst its leadership, thus, complicating efforts to resolve the conflicts in the sub-region.

Militarily, there were few ECOWAS Member States that had the capability to undertake strategic force projection without outside assistance. This was compounded by a lack of joint operational doctrine and a structure within ECOWAS to manage peacekeeping operations since ECOWAS was designed primarily to serve economic integration.

By August 1990, there were 225,000 Liberian refugees in Guinea, 150,000 in Cote d'Ivoire, and 69,000 in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, 5,000 people had been killed and about 3,000 Nigerian, Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean citizens were being held hostage by the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia led by Charles Taylor. The apparent global disinterest in the unfolding drama and the humanitarian imperative left ECOWAS with no other choice but to rely heavily on its own resources to stop the carnage. Under a shaky peace agreement, the ECOMOG Force that was put together in a rush was meant to supervise a cease-fire, while an interim government was to be established, which would organize elections after twelve months. ECOMOG had no mandate to enforce peace. When the troops arrived, they were stiffly resisted by the rebel group. It took a lot of courage, trial and error tactics in uncharted waters, commitment by a few Member States, particularly Nigeria, for ECOMOG to eventually emerge victorious.

Building on Experience: From Ad-Hoc to Permanent Structures for Conflict Management

With subsequent missions, however, ECOWAS responses to crises became more rapid and an incremental projection of professionalism and capability was clearly visible, as ECOWAS undertook subsequent missions in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia again in 2003 and more recently, in Cote d'Ivoire. Moreover, serious thought was now given to the development of robust institutional frameworks for conflict management.

ECOWAS leaders were compelled to raise conflict prevention and resolution to the same status as the development agenda, and for good reason: Since 1990, wars and instability in Africa are estimated to have cost the continent about USD 300 Billion in lost revenue, the equivalent of international aid from major donors in the same period, according to the October 2007 report *Africa's Missing Billions* that was put together by the international humanitarian agencies Oxfam, IANSA and Saferworld.

ECOWAS accordingly enacted new statutes to reflect the new realities. **The ECOWAS Treaty** was revised in 1993 to confer supra-nationality to the regional body. In 1999, the institution adopted the **Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security**, followed closely by the adoption of the **Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance** in 2001. Together, these legal instruments constitute a comprehensive framework for confronting the new threats to peace and security on a more permanent basis and dealing with the entire conflict chain from pre-crisis tensions through to peace-building. ECOWAS is currently operationalizing the Mechanism by boosting its conflict prevention capabilities to pre-empt potential outbreak of violence elsewhere, to intervene in a robust manner where conflicts have broken out, and to engage more effectively in post-conflict reconstruction in places, where peace has been restored. These efforts were truly 'landmark' decisions and efforts and the very first in Africa.

Subsequently, when crisis erupted in Cote d'Ivoire in September 2002, even though the implementation of the Mechanism (1999) was still in its infancy, the political and military approach to the conflict was remarkably different. The Mechanism was activated. The Defense and Security Commission, the Mediation and Security Council and the Authority of Heads of State and Government played their roles as required by the Mechanism. In fact, ECOMOG was able to rapidly deploy to stabilize the situation in Cote d'Ivoire.

Experience has shown that ECOWAS has developed a comparative advantage in the area of conflict management and is a model for the continent. With every new threat to peace and security, ECOWAS has been perfecting its capacity for early response. Indeed, ECOMOG has always intervened in conflicts in West Africa to create the necessary conditions for the deployment of broader UN peacekeeping and international humanitarian missions. Thus, a new formula for crisis response based on the Mechanism is slowly evolving whereby, with the emergence of internal conflict or unrest, an immediate ECOWAS mediation and political solution is sought. Failing a resolution, a Vanguard Force is dispatched to contain the impact of the conflict. Based on the situation, the force is expanded and stabilization sought. Finally, as negotiated and based on need, the ECOWAS force is converted or 'recapped' into UN mission. This "formula for success" has already taken place in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire.

The Pan-African Standby Force

Since the creation of the Organization of African Unity in 1963, several African leaders have been putting forward the idea of a standing continental force – the African High Command – capable of rapid intervention to maintain peace on the continent. Since 2003, this idea has been coming to fruition under the auspices of the African Union through the establishment of the African Stand-by Force (ASF). The ASF idea flows logically from recommendations in the Brahimi Report on the reform of UN peace support operations, particularly with regard to the setting up of a Standing High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG). Designed for rapid deployment in peace-keeping, the ASF comprises five brigades, one brigade to be provided by each of the five African Regional Economic Communities. Thus, since 2004, ECOWAS has been taking

measures to transform ECOMOG into the ECOWAS Standby Brigade by training, equipping and putting on standby a composite Brigade made up of military and civilian components backed by a logistics capability ready to be deployed at short notice in situations of crises, violent conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. ECOWAS is well placed to be the first REC to deliver its brigade by 2009.

III. PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY AS CONFLICT PREVENTION STRATEGY

Distinguished Guests, ECOWAS places a high premium on good political governance, evolution of democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. In the past, weak governance had blighted the development of many West African countries. Manifestations of weak governance included bad government policies and an economic and political climate that discouraged investment in the ECOWAS region. They also included corruption and bureaucratic systems that were impervious to scrutiny and not answerable to the public, as well as the absence strong mechanisms that ensured that peoples' voices were heard and their rights upheld, such as parliaments, the media and the justice system.

Over the last decade, however, West African leaders have demonstrated a firm commitment to sound democratic practices by creating the required peaceful and stable framework for sound political and economic governance. The ECOWAS/NEPAD agenda places a high premium on deepening democratic culture and achieving good governance in West Africa. ECOWAS Member States adopted the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in December 2001 as a supplementary protocol to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention. Together, the two ECOWAS Protocols provide the supranational framework and authority for ECOWAS intervention in Member States on issues relating to governance, democratic culture and human rights, respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law, probity and accountability, peace and security.

Emanating from these protocols is ECOWAS adherence to the policy of 'zero tolerance' towards unconstitutional and violent usurpation of power, backed by a strong determination to ensure credible, transparent, and free and fair elections in the sub-region. This new policy was amply demonstrated by the proactive steps that ECOWAS took in Guinea-Bissau in 2003 to oppose the military coup d'état and also in 2005, when ECOWAS stepped in to ensure a succession that was in conformity with the constitution of Togo following the death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema.

ECOWAS and the Role of Civil Society, Research Institutions and the Private Sector in the Integration Effort

Keen observers of West Africa, and indeed Africa, will not have failed to realize the pivotal role that **civil society** has played and continues to play in the incremental transition towards open societies and the rule of law in the sub-region. I am referring to the valiant acts of student movements, organised as well as unorganized labour, professional associations, actors

in the informal sector, research institutions, churches and mosques, traditional rulers, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in the relentless struggle against dictatorships, military rule and bad governance in West Africa. Commendable as their actions have been, these important institutions have tended to be weak and their interventions often spontaneous and uncoordinated.

Recognising the strategic role civil society, in its broadest understanding, can play as a veritable partner in the stabilisation process, ECOWAS has, over the last four years, facilitated the emergence of a coordinating structure for the disparate civil society groups in West Africa, including research institutions and think tanks. As a consequence, the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF) and the Network of Think Tanks and Research Institutions have been set up with the objective of facilitating capacity enhancement and networking among CSOs, research institutions and others in popularising ECOWAS initiatives in Member-States and mobilising critical civil society and research inputs across the sub-region to strengthen and accompany regional development efforts.

ECOWAS has also set up a dedicated Youth Centre and a Gender Centre in Ouagadougou and Dakar respectively to serve as empowering units for young people and women and to promote peace education across the sub-region in collaboration with UNESCO and other developing partners. The ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training of September 2002 sets out the sub-regional norms for promoting formal, informal and vocational training for the youth, particularly the girl-child.

Specifically on education, the ECOWAS Protocol on Education and Training recognizes education and training as an indispensable part of the mechanism for the realisation of the objectives of the Community. The Protocol aims at eliminating the constraints preventing nationals of Member States, both men and women, from having access to a good education and from availing themselves of the openings for training within the sub-region. In particular, it emphasises the need for simplification and ultimate elimination of immigration formalities in order to facilitate the free movement of students and workers within the sub-region for the specific purposes of study, teaching, research and other pursuits relating to education and training; formulation of policies designed to create an enabling environment with incentives based on merit, and targeting well educated and trained individuals, with a view to encouraging them to use their expertise in the service of the entire Community. It also promotes the teaching and study of national and cross-border languages; phased introduction of equivalences, harmonisation and standardisation of the educational and training systems, including the certificates, degrees and diplomas awarded within the Community.

In today's globalized world, discourse on economic growth and the fight against poverty cannot take place without the private sector at the table. While Governments have a primary responsibility to facilitate the development of infrastructure to cater for the educational, nutritional and medical needs of the population, the private sector constitutes the ultimate machine for job creation and empowerment and it is a valuable partner in our efforts to eliminate poverty and empower the youth.

IV. THE RETURN TO INTEGRATION

The Role of ECOWAS in Infrastructure Development towards Greater Integration

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me assure you that even while ECOWAS has invested enormous resources in stabilizing the sub-region, it has not abandoned its primary *raison d'être*, i.e. economic integration. Addressing the structural causes of instability calls for a comprehensive agenda that ensures the attainment of human security, whose basic elements include food and environmental security; infrastructure development; skills and employment opportunities; enhanced intra-African trade; access to markets; and democracy and good governance predicated on the rule of law, guarantee of basic freedoms and responsible resource management.

In May 2002, the West African Heads of State and Government took the decision to domesticate the agenda of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by forging internal partnerships, ensuring local ownership and seeking external support to ensure the implementation of NEPAD's plan of action, namely peace, security, democracy and political governance; economic and corporate governance; bridging the infrastructure gap; human resource development, especially in education and health; and market access. The ECOWAS leaders designated ECOWAS as the sub-regional focal point not only for the NEPAD initiative, but also as the facilitating agency for setting standards for the development of region-wide infrastructure and for greater intra-regional trade, economic integration and market access under the ECOWAS common market programme, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between ECOWAS and the European Union and the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) between the US and Africa.

The ECOWAS common market programme involves the consolidation of the free trade area and the introduction of the ECOWAS common external tariff (CET). Within the context of the fast-track initiative, ECOWAS is implementing a macroeconomic policy convergence programme aimed at establishing a single currency – **the eco** – by 2009 to lay the foundation for a single monetary zone in West Africa and to give a tremendous boost to intra-regional trade and economic integration.

The ECOWAS infrastructure programme includes important initiatives in the fields of energy, air, sea and road transport as well as ICT and telecommunications. These programmes form part of the NEPAD Infrastructure Short-term Action Plan. The ECOWAS **energy master plan** covers the construction of:

- **Hydro-electric dam sites in six countries across the sub-region.**

- **Thermal Plants:** the construction of gas-fuelled thermal plants in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire; and the rehabilitation of plants in Nigeria (all together providing about 9,000mw);
- **West Africa Power Pool:** ECOWAS has also commenced action to ensure inter-connectivity of national electricity grids with an installed capacity of 10,000mw (to provide the equivalent of the region's energy requirements by 2015).
- Also, The 500 million-dollar flagship **West Africa Gas Pipeline** project, which is on the verge of pumping clean Nigerian gas to Benin, Togo and Ghana and beyond, is an example of public/private partnership as all of the funds were raised by the private sector through a consortium led by Chevron-Shell with governments providing the enabling environment for the investment.

In the **telecoms sector** work also progressed in two directions, aimed at connecting the West African capitals with direct microwave links and increase telecoms traffic in ECOWAS, and also modernising and expanding telecommunication services in the region with a view to increasing efficiency, reducing tariffs and providing cellular phones with cheaper roaming facilities.

In the transport sector, development has proceeded in two phases, aimed at first, setting up of rules and regulations to streamline and harmonise technical specifications for road transport facilitation across national boundaries; and second, the construction of the West African highway network as part of the continental net-work - trans-coastal, from Lagos to Nouakchott and trans-sahelian, from Dakar to N'djamena. In order to facilitate air and sea transport, the ECOWAS leadership have also endorsed the plans to create ECOAIR (a regional airline) and ECOMARINE (a regional shipping line).

Free Movement of People

In its quest to promote market integration, ECOWAS has worked to achieve the **free movement of persons** within ECOWAS space through the abolition of visa and entry requirements, providing for the right of residence and establishment, the introduction of a common ECOWAS Passport and the ECOWAS Brown Card to facilitate vehicular movement across states. Through the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (TLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET), the Organisation is working hard to facilitate the free movement of goods by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers. Indeed, West Africa is the only African sub-region, where citizens do not require a visa to enter any Member State.

ECOWAS anticipates that by the end of 2009 the sub-region will have achieved a much more integrated regional economy and a structured regional approach to the reduction of the level of poverty under the ECOWAS Poverty reduction Strategic Plan.

V. MIXED RESULTS IN INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Ladies and Gentlemen, I began my intervention by pointing to the original agenda of ECOWAS – regional economic integration. Though much progress has been made in this area, a lot more remains to be done. Global trade patterns and growth figures continue to put Africa far behind the other regions of the world. Almost fifty years after independence, EU remains the main trading partner of West Africa but the sub-region accounts for only 1.2% of overall EU trade. ECOWAS States provide 80% of EU cocoa imports, 15% of rubber imports and 10% of fish imports. Exports from the ECOWAS region to the EU market increased from USD 8.8 Billion in 2002 to 14 Billion in 2005 but much of this was due to the significant increase in the export of oil and mineral products – from 48% of EU imports to 69% in the same period. Overall, 81% of ECOWAS imports from the EU are composed of manufactured products while raw materials, agricultural and fish made up 90% of the sub-region's exports to the European market.

Meanwhile, intra-ECOWAS trade is estimated to be only between 8.5% and 14%, mainly composed of livestock and crude oil products, beers, cooking oil and building materials. Outside raw material production, most African economies, especially in West Africa, have turned toward commercial activity rather than the production of goods; generally, individuals in West Africa are producing less wealth than they did three or four decades ago, yet the population has tripled; a tripling of population without a corresponding increase of the GDP implies falling GDP.

Statistics tell us that Africa's economies are currently growing by an average of 4 to 4.5% per annum over the last decade, which shows an upturn in fortunes for the continent. However, these statistics mask untold stories. The 2006 UNDP Human Development Report puts West Africa in a disturbingly bad light in relation to other parts of the world, despite the relative progress made in democracy and development in the past few years. The Report divides the 177 States examined into three broad categories of human development – high, medium and low. Needless to emphasize, all West African States except two fall under the Low Human Development category, with the last five spots in the global league table occupied by West African States.

Against this backdrop, West Africa is experiencing the fastest population growth and youth bulge in the world. From the figure of 120 million in 1975, West Africa's population is projected to hit 430 million by 2020, with 45% under the age of 15. With current annual growth rates of 4 to 4.5% and population average annual growth rates of about 3.5%, Africa would need to grow its economy at the rate of 7% or more to be able to significantly make an impact on the pervasive and excruciating poverty in our region.

While youth literacy rates (within the 15-24 age bracket) is appreciable across the continent at 71% according to the 2006 Human Development Report, the quantitative figures mask the quality deficiencies and gender/regional discrepancies in today's education, as well as the dearth of employment opportunities for the youth. Youth unemployment is between 60 and 70%. Across the sub-continent, life expectancy stands at 46 years. More worryingly, income

inequality is widest in Africa, with the richest 10% of the population appropriating 30% of the national income while the poorest 10% own a paltry 2.1%.

Thus, Africa is still lagging far behind the other continents in terms of human development and it is engaged in competition in the world market with Asia, Latin America, North America and Europe, whose economies are growing at between 5 and 11% per annum. Simple arithmetic shows that unless radical steps are taken to reverse the trend, the continent will continue to lag behind the others and the prospects of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by halving poverty by 2015 look bleak.

VI. REPOSITIONING ECOWAS FOR THE INTENSIFICATION OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, The disturbing statistics illustrated above call for more radical measures to speed up our drive for self-sufficiency and greater integration. Accordingly, ECOWAS has kept its priorities under constant review. Thus, to prepare the Organization to fully assume its role as West Africa's focal point on NEPAD implementation, it developed a short term action plan that set major priorities in the areas of food security, poverty alleviation, enhanced infrastructure development and the restructuring of ECOWAS institutions to meet the demands of the times. The restructuring exercise was underpinned by the realization that the achievements of the sub-region would not be sustainable unless they are underpinned by community ownership, where Member States and citizens alike appropriate and lead in the design, implementation and monitoring of Community initiatives. Hence, the need to generate greater awareness of Community initiatives among the broader population, designate clear roles and responsibilities to critical regional stakeholders and leverage the necessary resources to enhance capacity and facilitate implementation.

In June 2006, the Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government took the decision to transform the ECOWAS Secretariat into a Commission effective January 2007 with greater supra-national powers and with a mandate to transform the Organization from "ECOWAS of Member States" into "ECOWAS of the Peoples". Further, the mandates of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice and Community Parliament were refocused to further facilitate the promotion and consolidation of social justice, rule of law and democracy in the sub-region.

The Commission has since adopted a strategic vision, approved by the Heads of State in June 2007, which comprises five priority mission areas. They include: infrastructure development; agriculture; trade and market access; poverty alleviation and peace and security. The ECOWAS strategic framework bestows a corporate self-identity on ECOWAS, guided by the principles of priorities-driven programming, effective synergy within the Commission and with Member States, ownership, partnership, accountability, sharing of best practices, results-based management and sustainability. This overarching strategy is complemented by sectoral strategic frameworks to scientifically guide our interventions in various fields.

VII. CONCLUSION

- Director of the Woodrow Wilson Center,
- Esteemed Scholars, Researchers, Fellows and Students of Woodrow Wilson Center,
- Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen,

In taking you along the journey of regional integration in West Africa and the role ECOWAS has played in this arduous but uplifting task, my aim has been to demonstrate to you how the sub-region has been preparing itself to serve as a formidable building block for continental integration; a zone that is an integral part of the African continental space within the context of a global village, where all human beings live and interact in peace and dignity. Our immediate goal is therefore to create a borderless sub-region in which the peoples have access to opportunities and choice and are able to enjoy the fruits of the sub-region's enormous resources and live in peace under the rule of law, good governance and a healthy environment.

We seek the dignity and self-fulfillment of the individual and the Community. In this journey the sub-region needs equal partnerships to supplement indigenous efforts. As scholars and researchers with an acute sense of your role in the advancement of humanity, you have a special responsibility to facilitate the alleviation of the plight of the peoples in the developing world, home to the vast majority of humanity, and to promote equality, dignity, peace and solidarity among the peoples of the world. To my mind, these are the ideals that Woodrow Wilson stood for.

Thank you very much for your attention.