**AFE BABALOLA UNIVERSITY, ADO EKITI, EKITI**

**ASSIGNMENT**

**ON**

**THE ECOWAS CONFLICT PREVENTION FRAMEWORK (ECPF) AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS SINCE 2008 IN THE PREVENTION OF MAJOR CONFLICT IN WEST AFRICA.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

ECOWAS first took a reactionary approach to conflict, putting out fires. Learning from years of experience, however, it shifted to an approach emphasizing pre-empting and preventing conflicts from starting. The organization developed a robust strategy to employ structural and operational means of preventing conflicts across the sub-region. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) was adopted in 2008 by the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It is: a guide for enhancing cohesion and synergy between relevant ECOWAS departments on conflict prevention initiatives in order to maximize outcomes and ensure a more active and operational posture on conflict prevention and sustained postconflict reconstruction from the ECOWAS system and its Member States (ECPF, 2008:7).

Its overall aims are to strengthen human security architecture in West Africa, and to integrate conflict prevention and peace-building activities into its initiatives. It has fifteen components for which activities and measurable outputs have been developed. The components include: Early Warning; Preventive Diplomacy; Democracy and Political Governance; Human Rights and the Rule of Law; Media; Natural Resource Governance; Cross-border Initiatives; Security Governance; Practical Disarmament; Women Peace and Security; Youth Empowerment; ECOWAS Standby Force; Humanitarian Assistance; Peace Education; and Enabling Mechanisms. There is likely no other ECOWAS framework that has undergone more rigorous processes of scrutiny and inclusivity. Prior to its adoption, the strategic framework had undergone a conceptualization phase, wherein the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Adviser Dr. Abdel-Fatua Musah and his team analysed the particular threats to peace and stability in the sub-region, and then identified specific actions tailored to counter those threats. This phase also entailed an internal ECOWAS review and contributions from relevant departments within the Commission. Following the production of a first ECPF Draft, the ECOWAS Commission convened workshops for peace and security experts from relevant intergovernmental organizations. These workshops, conducted between June and December 2007, included experts from the UN and the AU, leading civil society actors, ECOWAS Training Centres of Excellence, academic institutions and member states' experts on political affairs. They further finetuned the framework prior to its presentation for adoption by ECOWAS authorities in 2008.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

 The adoption of the ECPF raised a lot of expectations across the region, especially among civil society organizations (CSOs) working on peace and security issues , development partners, the ECOWAS' multilateral partners, and the ECOWAS Commission itself. Its relevance and timeliness led to a consensus among political stakeholders that, if well implemented, there would be a drastic reduction in the outbreak of conflicts in the subregion. At the ECOWAS Commission level , midterm Plans of Action were developed for implementation in member states, in collaboration with civil society and government officials. Also established was an Internal Steering Committee (ECPFISC) that had the mandate of coordinating the operationalization of the framework within ECOWAS. The first major achievement of the ECPF was the fact that it steered the thinking among peace and security actors in the subregion towards a conflict prevention approach to peace and security. This resonated most among regional CSOs, which quickly developed or adopted already-stipulated programmes from the ECPF for implementation. Similarly, ECOWAS Commission Departments/Directorates that are not statutorily peace and securityoriented (such as the Mines and Energy, Free Movement, Education, and Environment) found it easy to establish the linkages between their mandates and conflict prevention. It therefore became easy for these directorates to develop conflict prevention programmes and activities in collaboration with the ECOWAS Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Another notable achievement post adoption is the establishment of the ECOWAS Mediation Facilitation Division (MFD). As prescribed in Paragraph 49 of the Preventive Diplomacy component of the ECPF, the MFD mandates ECOWAS 'build a mediation facilitation capacity within the Commission to promote preventive diplomacy interventions in the region through competence and s k i l l s enhancement of mediators, information-sharing and v logistical support.' The MFD was created earlier in 2015, and it is anticipated that its establishment will promote preventive diplomacy interventions through the enhancement of competence and skills enhancement of mediators, information-sharing, and the provision of logistics support, with its core objectives being operational vi support, the establishment of a mediation resource centre, and ensuring capacity-building in mediation.

**CHALLENGES:**

The enthusiasm that welcomed the adoption of the Framework in 2008 has been dampened by the inability to fully realize the ECPF. A number of factors are responsible for its limited operationalization:

i.The 'Distraction' of Threats to Peace and Security in the Subregion, and Its Effects Upon Limited Human Resources at ECOWAS; While building its capacity for conflict prevention, ECOWAS has had to simultaneously engage emerging and ongoing threats to peace and security. The multifaceted mission is made even more difficult by the rotation of ECOWAS leadership, which disrupts continuity and degrades institutional memory. The ECOWAS Commission is in a state of constant flux, along with the sub-region it oversees; institutional constraints and constant security threats hamper new leadership's understanding of the organization's internal workings. While tackling old threats, new or latent threats inevitably surface, demanding urgent interventions. Such threats include the remnants o f authoritarianism, reversals in the consolidation of democracy and good governance, terrorism, drug and weapons trafficking, poor management of the natural resource sector, the threat of low intensity conflicts escalating, and youth bulges. Given that ECOWAS is yet to fully develop its reactive capacities to emergency crises, focus frequently shifts from implementing set o b j e c ti v e s t o i m m e d i a t e l y addressing emergency situations, as exemplified by the Mali crisis. It is well known that when major political events take place in the region, such as democratic elections in member states, ECOWAS deploys all of its resources to facilitate the conduct of such activities. As a result, programmes and activities earmarked for implementation during a calendar year may be delayed or abandoned. Between 2009 and 2012, a period characterized by political crises across the sub-region, ECOWAS had to prioritize the resolution of the crises over the implementation of earmarked programmes, including the ECPF operationalization process.

ii.Lack of a Coordinated Approach Between ECOWAS and Its Key Implementing Partners; The ECPF clearly identifies key implementing partners as the ECOWAS Commission, member states, and civil society. While the Commission has commenced the operationalization of the Framework, the synergy between the Commission and the other two key implementing partners are weak. Clearly, ECOWAS has the capacity to attract the resources required for implementation. The same cannot be said for member states and civil society. A platform where all implementing stakeholders assign responsibility and mutually reinforce each other's efforts does not exist.

iii.Low-Level of Awareness on the ECPF in Member States; In a study conducted by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre to determine the level of awareness of the ECPF in select member states (Benin, Burkina vii Faso, Liberia and Ghana), findings revealed that there was only lowlevel awareness of the ECPF in the states reviewed. Member states should ide a l l y be the ke y implementers of the Framework, but the study suggests little national ownership and little knowledge of the objectives of the ECPF. As mentioned earlier, member states' experts were an important part of the entire process, particularly at the conceptualization and adoption phases. These findings are a reflection of a greater challenge. Beyond the adoption of regional strategic frameworks, how does ECOWAS, in collaboration with its member states, ensure meaningful partnership at the implementation and evaluation stages? As the key recipients of the Framework, member states' governments will have to be actively involved in the operationalization process.

iv. Development Partners' Preference for' Trendy' Components; The ECPF has benefitted immensely from the support of development partners, especially the Danish International Development Agency, which was instrumental in ECPF's creation. Following its adoption, several development partners have also signalled their intentions to support the operationalization of the Framework. The EU, for example, earmarked Twenty Seven million Euros ) for the ECPF operationalization process in its 10th European Development Fund support to ECOWAS. Furthermore, the EU provided technical expertise to support ECOWAS' conflict viii prevention activities . However, partners' actual and pledged support (both financial and technical) tend to concentrate on a number of 'trendy' components — early warning, preventive diplomacy, democracy and political governance, natural resource governance, security governance, and women, peace and security. This trend is unsurprising, given the reality that development partner support is not only determined by the needs of the recipient, but also by the interests of the partners. This is a lopsided implementation process, with some components far more operationalized than the others.

v.Limited Resources for Civil Society Organizations in the Operationalization Process; Sub-regional CSOs that seek to implement specific aspects of the ECPF lack the required resources to do so. They lack the requisite resources and development partner assistance, both of which are available to ECOWAS. Perhaps the easiest way for CSOs to be more involved in the operationalization process is to be seen by ECOWAS as important co-implementers, and for the latter to ensure their active engagement in the process.

**CONLUSION**

ECOWAS has adopted a three-year Programmatic Matrix (2015-2017) to serve as a guide for the operationalization of the Framework. This is not to say that the operationalization process has only just commenced. Micro-level operationalization commenced in 2010, when ECOWAS directorates identified implementable programmes and activities from the Framework document. However, the three-year plan, developed by the ECPF-ISC, is to be implemented across the board by ECOWAS departments. Despite the enormous goodwill that its adoption generated, a number of challenges have hindered effective operationalization. However, in order to attain a thorough operationalization of the ECPF, a number of steps must be taken by ECOWAS, its member states, and civil society. Below are a set of proposals that will further facilitate effective operationalization:

ECOWAS and Its Implementing Partners:

i. Increased and structured collaboration between ECOWAS and other implementing actors. A first step should be the establishment of a mechanism for that purpose, a 'Regional ECPF Steering Committee.' The committee should be comprised of ECOWAS, a representative institution for civil ix society in West Africa, and member states' representatives, and should have the mandate of coordinating ECPF activities.

ii. The establishment of a Special ECPF Operationalization Fund, where development partners and the ECOWAS Commission can commit resources for the operationalization of the framework. This will help generate funding for regional CSOs, and will be overseen by the Regional ECPF Steering Committee

 iii. An M&E mechani sm overseeing the implementation processes for member states and CSOs. ECOWAS has its own M&E mechanism in place for the ECPF operationalization process.

iv. An officer at the ECOWAS National Unit office appointed by member states, to serve as the focal point on ECPF processes within each member state.

 The ECOWAS Commission:

 v. Another round of sensitization targeting member states and CSOs, which will also promote the buy - in o f development partners.

 vi. Prioritization of periodically-scheduled ECPF-ISC meetings, where major decisions on the operationalization are made. Internal difficulties at ECOWAS have made this difficult to achieve.

vii. The speedy recruitment of a team dedicated to the ECPF operationalization process. Adhoc arrangements that have been in place for some time cause staff to prioritize their primary assignments over the ECPF operationalization process.