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AN ASSIGNEMNET ON:

THE EVALUATION OF THE ECOWAS CONFLICT PREVENTION FRAMEWORK (ECPF) AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS SINCE 2009

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**INTRODUCTION**

The ECOWAS had achieved remarkable success in fulfilling its mandate by containing violent conflicts in the region and carrying out conflict prevention interventions through preventive diplomacy, diplomatic pressure and mediation. The institution established several promising conflict prevention organs to underpin its mandate, including the early warning system, the mediation and the Security Council. However the implementation of the preventive aspects of the mechanism had at times lacked a strategic approach. It was been characterized by weak internal coordination, underutilization and misdirection of existing human capacities as well as deployment of limited instruments. Therefore, the development of the strategic framework became necessary. By regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08 the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) was adopted in 2008. The purpose of the ECPF is to serve as a reference for the ECOWAS system and member states in their efforts to strengthen human security in the region. According to the ECPF, the regulation was to be published 30 days of its signature by the chairman of the mediation council. The regulation was to enter into force upon its publication and consequently, all member states were to commence implementation upon its entry into force.

**CONCEPT AND SCOPE OF THE ECPF**

The focus of the document is operational and structural conflict prevention. Operational measure measures are measures that are applicable in the face of imminent crisis. Operational prevention includes early warning, mediation, conciliation, preventive disarmament and preventive deployment using interactive means such as good offices and the ECOWAS standby force. Structural prevention are measures to ensure that the crisis does not arise in the first place or if they do, that they do not reoccur. The emphasis however, is not in preventing conflict per say since conflict is a natural consequence of change (inevitable). Its emphasis is in halting a conflicts descent into violence. Structural prevention is often elaborated under peace building initiatives and comprising political, institutional and developmental reforms; capacity enhancement and advocating the culture of peace.

Peace building on the other hand describes the development of pre requisite multi actor institutional capacity to design, implement and monitor initiatives aimed at checking the deterioration of social and economic conditions during hostilities, and strengthen peace of post- conflict countries over a long period of time to prevent relapse into violent conflict. Initiatives to this end include; humanitarian assistance, restoration and maintenance of economic and social infrastructure; restoration and reform of government institutions (political economic, sociocultural and security); justice; rule of law; reconciliation and reintegration; and conflict sensitive development.

**AIM**

The overall aim of the ECPF is to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa. The intermediate purpose is to create space within the ECOWAS system and in member states for cooperative interaction within the region and with external partners to push conflict prevention and peace building up the political agenda of member states in a manner that will trigger timely and targeted multi- actor and multi-dimensional action to defuse or eliminate potential and real threats to human security in a predictable and institutional manner

**OBECTIVES**

The ECPF has the following objectives:

1. Mainstream conflict prevention into ECOWAS’ policies and programs as an operational mechanism.
2. Increase understanding of the conceptual basis of conflict prevention, and in so doing, interrelate conflict prevention activities with development and humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness.
3. Build awareness and anticipation, and strengthen capacity within Member States and civil society to enhance their role as principal constituencies and actors in conflict prevention and peace-building.
4. Increase understanding of opportunities, tools and resources related to conflict prevention and peace-building at technical and political levels within Member States, the ECOWAS system and beyond.
5. Increase awareness and preparedness for cooperative ventures between ECOWAS, Member States, civil society and external constituencies (RECs, AU, EU, UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development/humanitarian agencies) in pursuit of conflict prevention and peace-building.
6. Strengthen capacity within ECOWAS to pursue concrete and integrated conflict prevention and peace-building facilitation, and concomitant activities such as development and humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness, in Member States using existing resources, such as the Departments of the Commission; the Early Warning System; supporting organs of the Mechanism, including the Council of the Wise and Special Mediators; and other ECOWAS institutions.
7. Enhance ECOWAS’ anticipation and planning capabilities in relation to regional tensions.
8. Extend opportunities for conflict prevention to post-conflict environments through targeted restructuring of political governance, conflict-sensitive reconstruction and development, as well as humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness, and related peace-building initiatives.
9. Generate a more pro-active and operational conflict prevention posture from Member States and the ECOWAS system.

**OUTPUTS**

The ECPF:

1. Set practical guidelines on conflict prevention to which ECOWAS and member states can refer in their cooperation and in their engagement with partners
2. Set practical guidelines for cross-departmental and cross-initiative cooperation and synergy within ECOWAS on conflict prevention
3. Provides practical guidance for cooperative ventures between ECOWAS, member states, civil society and external partners in pursuit of conflict prevention and peace building
4. Incorporates an ECOWAS strategy on resource mobilization, advocacy and communication to underpin the initiatives with respect to conflict prevention and peace building
5. Creates the necessary bridge linking everyday conflict prevention initiatives to structural (strategic) conflict prevention
6. Shall be supplemented by a plan of action logical framework with identified priority activities to be undertaken by ECOWAS , member states , civil societies, the private sector and external partners in the short, medium and long term

**COMPONENTS OF THE ECPF**

THE ECPF comprises of fourteen components that span the chain of initiatives designed to strengthen human security and incorporate conflict prevention activities. Each of these components has activities that would be undertaken to achieve their objectives, as well as benchmarks for assessing their progress and successes.

These components are; (1) early warning signs; (2) preventive diplomacy; (3) democracy and political governance; (4) human rights and the rule of law; (5) media; (6) natural resource governance; (7) cross border initiatives; (8) security governance; (9) practical disarmament; (10) women peace and security;(11) youth empowerment; (12) ECOWAS standby force; (13) humanitarian assistance and (14)peace education(The culture of peace)

**ENABLING MECHANISMS OF THE ECPF**

The enabling mechanisms of the ECPF include advocacy and communication; resource mobilization; cooperation and monitoring and evaluation.

ECOWAS has not been able to capitalize sufficiently on its successes by selling its achievements to the wider public in member states and also within the international community. To correct the imbalance, ECOWAS shall develop an aggressive advocacy and communication strategy including initiatives already outlined under the media component. ECOWAS shall promote activities like; awareness, promotions, branding the ECOWAS products, selling the ECOWAS product, documentation and publications and partnerships which would be benchmarked by well stocked libraries, up to date literature on ECOWAS in schools and higher institutions, greater international interest in ECOWAS and greater goodwill of development, amongst others. Securing adequate funding from international, regional and international sources is essential for sustainable peace and security interventions and the success of the ECPF. Therefore, the ECOWAS shall adopt all necessary measures to expand its resource base and establish a dedicated fund for conflict prevention and peace building, including for unforeseen interventions. ECOWAS shall source through channels identified like facilitating resource mobilization by member states and promoting intra ECOWAS assistance to post conflict member states, fundraising from private sector and individual donors etc.

Also cooperation among stakeholders which aims at building synergies for coordinated interventions in conflict prevention and peace building taking into account the comparative advantage of each partner and the need for division of labor to add value to the collective efforts of all stakeholders. Intra ECOWAS cooperation where all departments, centers, units, decentralized, and autonomous institution shall take ownership of the ECPF was also outlined. The framework for the plan of action that was to be developed was to be derived from intra ECOWAS cooperation on peace and security imperatives of the ECOWAS vision.

Provisions were also made for cooperation with civil society organizations, member states, African union, the United Nations and cooperation with development partners. Lastly, the purpose of the monitoring and evaluation process is to access the progress of all aspects of the ECPF on a regular basis with a view to gauging impacts on the conflict landscape in west Africa and applying corrective and incremental or reinforcing measures, wherever and whenever necessary, to maximize outcomes. Outlined measures were to be undertaken in the M and E process.

**EVALUATION OF ECPF’s EFFECTIVENESS**

In terms of general assessment of the performance of ECOWAS conflict management framework, significant achievement has been made by ECOWAS in conflict management. The fact that the ECOWAS sub-region has been transformed from a zone of crippling wars (especially in the Mano River Region) in the 1990s into an area where no active war is raging today is a mark of progress that has been made. At the same time, it can be argued that democratic culture is gradually taking root in many of ECOWAS member states. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone, two of the most disturbing and unstable states in West Africa have successfully conducted consecutive general elections. So have some other ECOWAS member countries including Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. Comparatively, ECOWAS has recorded more successes in the area of crisis management and has become a reference point in the African continent. It can be said that with every threat to regional security, ECOWAS has shown commendable improvement in terms of capacity for quick and early response. Its experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone were an important learning curve which prepared the ECOWAS for future conflict diplomacy. For example, ECOWAS displayed its capacity to manage the crises in Guinea Bissau in 2003 and Togo in 2005.

However, ECOWAS can be said not to have performed too well in terms of response to the blatant disregard of its democratic principles by President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast who refused to step down after his opponent Allasane Quattara was declared winner of the November 28, 2010 elections. Although ECOWAS on more than one occasion sent special envoys to Cote d’Ivoire on the matter and had also threatened to use force to remove Gbagbo, the President defied all efforts by the ECOWAS to uphold democracy and the legitimate will of the Ivorian people. The organization could only call on the United Nations to beef up its resolve against Gbagbo.

Nonetheless, this shortcoming is being corrected by the organization with regard to the crisis in Mali. On a general note, there have been renewed cases of political instability in some of its member countries such as Nigeria (2015) and the Gambia (2016). These challenges are not unconnected with the process of democratization in the sub-region; including problems relating to governance, electoral reforms the rule of law; problems of leadership, corruption, hunger and poverty and so on. Islamic terrorism is fast sweeping across West Africa typified by the Boko Haram in Nigeria, ethno-political crises in Northern Mali, Mauritania, and Niger in a complex web linked to the ethnic Tuaregs across these countries and so on. These crises have become major problems that not only threaten the security and stability of the country involved but also that of other countries in the sub-region especially neighboring countries. These could be considered as early warning signs which challenge ECOWAS to develop a robust framework to address if it is to avoid full blown conflicts across the sub-region with the potential to hamper its goal of sustainable peace and development.

Reviewing ECOWAS’s responses to challenges to peace and security in the last five years suggests that the institution’s conflict prevention tools are currently stronger than its conflict management tools. At present, ECOWAS standby force does not have the logistical and financial capability to deploy militarily. ECOWAS’s efforts to address the issue of logistics by building a depot in Sierra Leone are unlikely to solve the problem since it still does not have enough financial resources for either material or strategic airlifts. In addition, given Nigeria’s current internal security challenges, it is unclear whether it could spare its pledged troops for an ESF mission. This is a serious problem given that Nigeria is meant to contribute more than half of the pledged ESF troops.

Despite these challenges, however, it is important to remember that ECOWAS has been quite successful in helping to stabilize the political situation in Guinea-Bissau through its small peacekeeping mission in the country, ECOMIB. In contrast, ECOWAS appears to have made significant inroads in its conflict prevention work. The general consensus among experts is that ECOWAS has accomplished quite a lot in the sphere of conflict prevention. ECOWAS’s work on democracy, especially as it relates to election monitoring, is often mentioned as an emerging area of success. Another arguably crucial component of conflict prevention is the early warning system, ECOWARN. Monitoring various indicators related to pandemics, social factors believed to be related to social unrest and armed conflict; it seeks to alert the Commission to emerging security threats.

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