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the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in 2008, adopted1 the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), to serve as strategic framework for improving conflict prevention and human security. The adoption of the ECPF is an addition to several initiatives in the form of key protocols and conventions that aim at building a stable West Africa as prerequisite for social, political and economic development.

Some of the earlier initiatives by ECOWAS to promote stability in the sub-region include the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978), the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence (1982); ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993); the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (hereafter the Mechanism); Declaration of Political Principles (1991); and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). Over the years, with the mandate provided under these protocols, ECOWAS has made significant contributions to the promotion of peace and security in Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, where violent conflicts took place.

Also, ECOWAS’ preventive diplomacy initiatives averted largescale violence in countries such as Niger, Guinea and Togo. Given that several initiatives have been undertaken by ECOWAS to promote conflict prevention since it was founded in 1975, it is important to raise a number of questions with regard to the ECPF. First, how relevant is the ECPF in respect of conflict prevention? Second, how different is it from existing initiatives that equally seek to promote sub-regional stability? Third, how is the ECPF to be implemented? And, what are the prospects and challenges of its successful implementation? This policy paper answers the above questions by examining the ECPF. It also makes policy recommendations on steps that need to be taken to ensure the successful implementation of the ECPF.

And lastly the ECPF is an important initiative which when implemented would contribute to an improvement in human security, and calls for broader stakeholder participation in its implementation.