



# **STATEMENT ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND PROSPERITY**

**BY**

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**AT THE**

**WEST AFRICA ECONOMIC SUMMIT (WAES)**

**THEME: “UNLOCKING TRADE AND INVESTMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION”**

**ABUJA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

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1. **EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**, it is an honour to address this esteemed gathering **united to unlock our region's trade and investment potential.**

2. I would like to express my gratitude to our gracious host, **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**, for his vision in bringing us together for this important **WEST AFRICA ECONOMIC SUMMIT.**

**3.** I thank the organisers and partners of this vital Summit for their commitment to enhancing trade and investment in West Africa.

**4.** I appreciate the opportunity to share Sierra Leone's perspective on regional integration and prosperity.

**EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

5. West Africa has significant potential due to its abundant natural resources and a dynamic, youthful population.
6. This potential must be unlocked through strategic integration, especially in light of rising public debt, climate vulnerability, food insecurity, and geopolitical uncertainties affecting our economies.

7. As leaders facing global economic competition, we must take decisive actions to accelerate regional integration programs vital for economic growth and shared prosperity.

8. This needs improved collaboration, policy alignment, and a commitment to strengthening our economies' global competitiveness through **ECOWAS protocols** and **AfCFTA**.

## **EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

- 9.** Trade integration must start with a strong political commitment from all Member States.
- 10.** We should engage in key regional initiatives, such as the **ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS)** to reduce tariffs and barriers and the **Common External Tariff (CET)** to harmonise trade policies.

11. In Sierra Leone, a significant number of companies have authorised products registered under the **ETLS**.
12. We are modernising our customs infrastructure by implementing the **ASYCUDA WORLD system** and improving trade data classification and collection.
13. Efforts are underway to implement **ECOWAS biometric ID cards** in line with the **Free Movement Protocol**, strengthening regional mobility.

## **EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

**14. To deepen trade and boost intra-regional competitiveness, we must accelerate progress toward monetary union.**

**15.** A single regional currency would reduce exchange rate costs, support price stability, and improve the business environment.

**16. Securing funding is a significant challenge.**



**17.** We need to adopt innovative financing models to develop essential infrastructure like roads, railways, ports, and air transport systems, which will enhance connectivity, reduce logistics costs, and facilitate the movement of people and goods.

**18. Participation in regional projects like the West African Power Pool is essential.**

**19.** Expanding electricity access and lowering energy costs will make our region more attractive to investors and support industrial growth.

**20. Strengthening regional stock exchanges and harmonising capital markets** is essential for enhancing financial integration and unlocking investment flows.

**21. Our youth — the heartbeat of our continent — must be empowered to thrive across regions.**

**22.** We need to invest in their skills and support their startups, as they are the innovators and entrepreneurs who will lead tomorrow.

## **YOUR EXCELLENCIES, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

**23.** As we anticipate the Summit's outcomes, we must act decisively to tackle ongoing challenges, including growing insecurity, macroeconomic imbalances hindering convergence, and institutional constraints slowing regional integration.

**24.** Harmonising **ECOWAS** policies in trade, customs, quality standards, statistical systems, and fiscal regimes for managing natural resources is vital for our desired growth and prosperity.

**25.** Let us continue to **engage development partners, investors, policymakers, and citizens to drive industrialisation, economic diversification, and shared opportunity in the ECOWAS region.**

**26.** I **reaffirm Sierra Leone's unwavering commitment to regional integration and prosperity for all.**

**27.** Our Government values strategic partnerships and invites private sector actors, development partners, and other African governments to collaborate in

agriculture, mining, energy, tourism, and the digital economy for sustainable growth and social progress.

**28.** Thank you for your attention.