



## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND**

**CHAIRMAN OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF**

**STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE ECOWAS COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF**

**THE NEW ECOWAS COMMISSION HEADQUARTERS**

**ABUJA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

**THURSDAY, 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2026**

- **YOUR EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA;**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCY, DR OMAR ALIEU TOURAY, PRESIDENT OF THE ECOWAS COMMISSION;**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCY, AMBASSADOR OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA;**
- **HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF GOVERNMENT;**
- **THE HEADS AND DEDICATED STAFF OF ECOWAS INSTITUTIONS;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS;**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**
- **GOOD AFTERNOON**

## **I. THE WEIGHT OF THIS MOMENT**

- 1.** More than fifty years ago, **the founders of ECOWAS dared to believe the impossible.**
- 2.** They believed that the nations of West Africa would achieve more together than they ever could apart.
- 3.** They chose cooperation over isolation; dialogue over division; and shared destiny over narrow national interest.
- 4.** That daring conviction gave birth to one of Africa's most enduring regional institutions, one that has withstood every test our region has faced.
- 5.** From political upheaval to security crises; economic shocks to humanitarian emergencies.

6. Through every storm, generation after generation chose to protect the **founding vision of ECOWAS.**

## **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

7. Today, **we gather to inaugurate the new Headquarters building and to renew our collective promise to the people of West Africa.**
8. We gather to **reaffirm our faith in the power of regional solidarity and to declare our shared determination to build an ECOWAS that is stronger, more responsive, more effective, and more worthy of the trust and aspirations of the people it serves.**
9. History does not remember generations for the buildings they constructed.
10. It remembers them for the institutions they strengthened, the values they upheld, and the lives they transformed.

- 11.** This new Headquarters building is therefore **the permanent home of our shared vision, collective ambition, and enduring commitment to regional integration and prosperity.**
  
- 12.** Within these walls, **decisions will be made that will shape the prosperous future of more than 450 million West Africans.**
  
- 13.** That is both **an extraordinary privilege and a profound responsibility that demands wisdom, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the people we serve.**

## II. GRATITUDE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

### EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 14.** Before we speak of the work ahead, **we must honour those who made this moment possible.**
  
- 15.** Your Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, **Nigeria's commitment to ECOWAS has been unwavering since the founding of our Community in 1975.**
  
- 16.** Through principled leadership, sustained financial support, and steadfast diplomatic engagement, **Nigeria has remained the great anchor of regional integration.**
  
- 17.** This magnificent Headquarters is yet another enduring expression of that commitment.

- 18. On behalf of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, I extend our profound gratitude to Your Excellency, your Government, and the great people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.**
- 19. I also express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency President Xi Jinping, the Government, and the people of the People's Republic of China.**
- 20. This Headquarters stands as a lasting testament to a partnership founded on mutual respect, enduring friendship, and practical cooperation.**
- 21. We receive this Headquarters with profound gratitude and an equally profound sense of responsibility.**
- 22. Its true legacy will be measured not by how it was built, but by how faithfully it advances the aspirations of the people of West Africa.**

**23. To the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Vice President, the Commissioners, the Management team, and every Member of Staff whose dedication brought this project to completion, WE THANK YOU.**

**24.** You have delivered a Headquarters worthy of our Institutions.

### **III. WHAT OUR PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR**

#### **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**25.** Our responsibility is not simply to preserve the ECOWAS we inherited.

**26.** It is to strengthen it, modernise it, and ensure that it remains equal to the demands of a changing world.

- 27.** Our citizens are no longer waiting for promises. **They are waiting for results that improve their daily lives.**
- 28.** **They want regional integration not as an aspiration on paper, but as a tangible reality that creates opportunity, expands prosperity, and strengthens security across our region.**
- 29.** They want traders to move goods across our borders without unnecessary barriers.
- 30.** They want young people to find opportunity within our region, without feeling compelled to seek their future elsewhere.
- 31.** They want their families to live in peace, security, and dignity.

- 32.** They want women to participate fully and equally in shaping our economies, strengthening our societies, and advancing our democratic future.
- 33. When these aspirations become reality, ECOWAS will truly fulfil its purpose.**
- 34. That is the measure of our success. And that is how history will judge us.**

**EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

- 35.** Fifty-one years on, we should draw confidence from all that we have built together, including the free movement of persons, the ECOWAS Passport, our peace support operations, our successful mediation efforts, and our unwavering commitment to constitutional governance.

**36.** These are enduring achievements that demonstrate what is possible when our nations act with unity of purpose, mutual trust, and a shared vision for our region.

**37.** It is upon this strong foundation that we must now build higher, think bolder, and act with greater resolve to create an ECOWAS that is more integrated, more resilient, and better equipped to meet the aspirations of our people.

#### **IV. THE CHALLENGES WE MUST CONFRONT**

##### **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**38.** We would be dishonest with ourselves if we spoke only of our achievements.

**39.** The challenges before us are real, urgent, and increasingly complex.

- 40. Security threats** continue to evolve in both scale and sophistication.
- 41. Climate change** is placing growing pressure on livelihoods, food security, and communities across our region.
- 42. Global economic uncertainty** continues to test the resilience of our economies and the wellbeing of our people.
- 43.** At the same time, **technological change** is reshaping every aspect of our societies at a pace few could have imagined.
- 44. None of these challenges respects national borders. Our response cannot be confined by them either.**

- 45. Perhaps the greatest test confronting our Community today is the challenge to the very principles upon which ECOWAS was founded.**
- 46. In parts of our region, constitutional order has been disrupted, democratic governance interrupted, and the path back to civilian rule remains uncertain.**
- 47. These developments extend far beyond the countries directly concerned.**
- 48. They affect the confidence of our citizens, the credibility of our Community, and the moral authority with which we speak for West Africa.**
- 49. Our response has been guided by principle, not expedience.**

**50. We have remained steadfast in defending constitutional order while keeping the door to dialogue open in pursuit of peaceful and constitutional political transitions.**

**51. We remain unwavering in our conviction that the people of West Africa deserve governments that are chosen by them, accountable to them, and committed to serving them.**

## **V. THE ECOWAS WE ARE BUILDING**

**EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**52. The future of West Africa will be determined not by the challenges we face, but by the courage, vision, and determination with which we confront them.**

- 53. ECOWAS Vision 2050 charts our path towards a peaceful, prosperous, inclusive, and resilient Community, built on deeper regional integration, expanded trade and investment, stronger connectivity, greater innovation, and wider opportunities for every citizen.**
- 54. The greatest strength of West Africa has always been its people.**
- 55. It is reflected in the resilience of our women, the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs, and the ambition, talent, and energy of our young people.**
- 56. If we invest wisely in education, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, our greatest export will no longer be raw materials.**
- 57. It will be our talent, our ideas, and our leadership, contributing not only to Africa's progress, but to the prosperity of the world.**

- 58.** More than sixty percent of our population is under the age of twenty-five.
- 59. They are not simply the leaders of tomorrow. They are the greatest opportunity of today.**
- 60.** Our responsibility is to equip them with the education, skills, opportunities, and enabling environment they need to innovate, create, lead, and prosper here in West Africa.
- 61.** We must also **continue to empower the women of West Africa** to participate fully in driving economic growth, strengthening communities, advancing peace, and shaping our collective future.

## VI. A CHARGE TO THE ECOWAS COMMISSION

### EXCELLENCIES,

**62.** Allow me now to speak directly to **the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Vice President, the Commissioners, the Management Team, and every dedicated member of staff who will serve within this Headquarters.**

**63.** Today, we inaugurate this Headquarters. **Tomorrow, its true purpose begins.**

**64.** Let every corridor reflect integrity. Let every office inspire excellence.

**65.** Let every meeting produce solutions. Let every decision strengthen the confidence of the people you serve.

- 66.** May this Headquarters be remembered not for the beauty of its architecture, **but for the wisdom of its decisions;** not for the offices it contains, **but for the lives it improves;** and not for its scale, **but for the quality of its service and the impact of its work.**
- 67.** Serve every Member State with professionalism, impartiality, and respect.
- 68.** Serve every citizen with dedication, humility, and purpose.
- 69.** In every decision, place the interests of the people of West Africa above all else.
- 70.** Public trust is never inherited. **It is earned each day through integrity, accountability, transparency, and excellence.**
- 71.** Let these principles define this institution.

**72. Uphold them. Protect them. Never compromise them.**

## **VII. THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS**

### **EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**73.** The enduring strength of ECOWAS has never rested solely on the institutions we have built.

**74.** It rests on the confidence that the people of West Africa place in those institutions.

**75.** That confidence must never be taken for granted. It must be earned, sustained, and renewed through leadership that delivers peace, opportunity, and tangible progress.

**76.** The first fifty years of ECOWAS were devoted to laying the foundations of regional integration.

**77. The next fifty years must be defined by a greater purpose: transforming those foundations into lasting prosperity, shared security, and wider opportunity for every citizen of our Community.**

**78.** One day, future generations will inherit this Headquarters.

**79.** When they stand where we stand today, they will not ask how impressive this building looked on the day it was inaugurated.

**80. They will ask what was achieved within its walls.**

**81.** They will ask: Did this generation preserve the peace?

**82.** Did it expand opportunity? Did it protect democracy?

- 83.** Did it deepen regional integration? Did it leave West Africa stronger than it found it?
- 84. Let our answer be an unequivocal yes.**
- 85.** Let it be said that **we honoured the vision of our founders and remained faithful to the ideals upon which this Community was established.**
- 86.** Let it also be said that **we advanced peace, expanded opportunity, strengthened regional integration, and left ECOWAS more united, more resilient, and stronger than we found it.**
- 87.** Buildings may endure for generations. **Their true legacy is measured by the lives they improve and the future they help to shape.**

- 88.** As we inaugurate this Headquarters today, **may it always be a place where dialogue prevails over division, cooperation over conflict, and hope over despair.**
- 89.** May it inspire every generation to build a West Africa that is more peaceful, more prosperous, and more united.
- 90.** And may it stand for generations as a lasting symbol of African unity, regional solidarity, and our shared determination to build a brighter future.
- 91.** May the Almighty God continue to bless the Economic Community of West African States.

**THANK YOU.**