

**MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
AT THE 31ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF
STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS
OUAGADOUGOU, 19 JANUARY, 2007**

Message of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

Read by:

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa

- **Your Excellency Mr. President Mamadou Tandja**
- **Your Excellency the President of Burkina Faso (Mr. Blaise Compaoré)**
- **Your Excellencies Mr. Presidents**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is with great pleasure that I address this message to the 31st Ordinary Session of the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS.

I salute the tireless efforts of President Mamadou Tandja, and the effectiveness of his mandate to build a new Africa in peace, where prosperity is shared.

ECOWAS was established to promote integration between its member states. During the past three and half decades, you have worked with persistence to achieve your objectives. Today in West Africa economic and social integration progresses and the free movement of people and goods is a clear reality.

Your region is undergoing important political and economic changes. I commend your determination to work together across borders to tackle the many challenges resulting from these changes. This is evident in the areas of conflict prevention and consolidation of peace. It is clearly evident that, without peace, there is no economic development and without security, regional integration will remain an unfinished ambition.

During recent years you took serious measures in order to tackle the causes of conflicts and poverty. The adoption of the ECOWAS Convention on light weapons and the efforts carried out to equip your sub-region with the capacity to maintain peace are symbolic of this political good-will.

Mr. President

The sight of hundreds of young West Africans without employment who put their lives at risk under difficult conditions to emigrate is of major concern.

In addition 2007 will be an extraordinary electoral year with a dozen Parliamentary and Presidential elections. Elections count one essential moment of the democratic life. They can also be an occasion for violence. I am convinced that you will do everything to make the 2007 electoral processes peaceful. From this point of view, the consensual approach of the Secretariat directed by Mohamed Ibn Chambas is efficient and appreciated.

Mr. President

West Africa is in a much better situation today. Admittedly difficult challenges remain to be addressed but there are reasons to be optimistic. In this respect the United Nations continues to cooperate and support ECOWAS in its ambition to put in place the changes which will concretely improve the lives of the ordinary citizens of the region.

I thank you.
