

**CENTRE DE LA CEDEAO POUR LE
DEVELOPPEMENT DU GENRE**



**ECOWAS GENDER
DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

Check against delivery

STATEMENT BY

**AMINATTA DIBBA
DIRECTOR**

ECOWAS GENDER DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

AT THE

**54TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK
8TH MARCH 2010**

Mr. Chairperson

Honourable Ministers of Women Affairs from ECOWAS Member states and other Honourable Ministers here present

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour and privilege to make this statement on the occasion of the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is a landmark event aimed at undertaking a review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action fifteen years after its adoption.

Before I proceed, please permit me to transmit to you greetings from His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, out-going President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Dr. Adrienne Diop, Commissioner for Human Development and Gender of ECOWAS. They both wish you successful deliberations and a fruitful outcome of this session.

This year's session is particularly crucial and timely for several reasons. Apart from the fact that it would provide a platform for various stakeholders to share experiences, competences and best practices in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this session will also enable us to collectively take stock of how far we have come with the implementation, to identify what else needs to be done and to map out the way forward. It will also enable us to critically examine emerging issues and consider ways of factoring them into the commitments and mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The challenges facing the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment are indeed enormous. Undoubtedly, significant progress has been made over the past fifteen years in the effort to remove the obstacles to women's advancement and to create conditions for equal opportunities in the social, political and economic spheres of life at the local and global levels. But a lot still remains to be done with respect to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In Africa, the African Union, its Regional Economic Communities and individual African countries have worked tirelessly over the years and have made significant progress in promoting the equitable participation of women in social, political and economic development processes at the national, regional and continental levels.

At the level of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), significant progress has been made with respect to the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition to the adoption of the Regional Gender Policy Framework and a Gender Management System as well as the establishment of appropriate structures, including a Gender Department and the Gender Development Centre, the ECOWAS Commission has initiated several programmes towards the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the ECOWAS region, particularly in the areas of trade, peace and security.

Mr. Chairperson

Honourable Ministers of Women Affairs from ECOWAS Member states and other Honourable Ministers here present

Distinguished Delegates

Since its establishment in 2003 through a decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre has worked closely with its stakeholders in ECOWAS Member states to build consensus on the appropriate ways to address the 12 critical areas of concern outlined by the Beijing Platform for Action.

In this regard, the Gender Centre developed two plans, namely a Plan of Action for the period 2005 – 2007 and a Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2013, predicated on the following key strategic objectives:

- To strengthen the national gender machineries to carry out their activities more effectively;
- To promote equitable access to basic social services in the ECOWAS region, particularly health and education;
- To strengthen the economic empowerment of women and promote their participation in the key sectors of the economy;
- To promote democracy, good governance, human rights, peace and security in the ECOWAS region;
- To build and strengthen cooperation and strategic partnerships with relevant regional and international organizations towards consolidating the gains made in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

These strategic objectives translated into activities that were carried out at national and regional levels, targeted specifically at the Centre's key stakeholders in Member States, including its focal points, gender focal points of sector ministries and other officials of the gender machineries in Member states, civil society organisations, parliamentarians, law enforcement agencies, organised women groups, gender advocates and private sector operators.

In the areas of poverty and access and control over economic resources, the main focus of ECOWAS through the interventions of the Gender Centre has been to work towards the economic empowerment of women and to promote their participation in the key sectors of the West African economy as a means of enhancing their access to economic resources and opportunities. The Gender Centre is also set to embark on a project that aims at providing financial and technical assistance to women engaged in agricultural and food processing activities, this year.

In the areas of education and health, ECOWAS, through the Gender Centre, has sought to create the framework for ensuring equitable access of men and women as well as boys and girls to basic social services such as health and education. Equally this year, the Centre will launch a pilot project to provide treatment to women and girls in ECOWAS Member states suffering from obstetric fistula. Similarly, the Centre is set to implement a project that aims at providing assistance to brilliant but needy girls to continue their education up to the tertiary level.

With regard to democracy, good governance, human rights, participation in decision making, peace and security, the Gender Centre seeks to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women as well as promote the active participation of women in decision making and other development processes at all levels of society, including peace initiatives and conflict resolution and management processes, in accordance with the provisions of UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820. To this effect, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that the Gender Centre has recently launched a Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO).

With respect to the strengthening of the capacity of the national gender machineries for effective gender mainstreaming, the Gender Centre has carried out several activities, including national training workshops on gender mainstreaming and analysis and a regional leadership training workshop for women from various sectors of Member states.

Mr. Chairman
Distinguished Delegates

The Gender Centre takes pride in its partnership with key stakeholders and you would no doubt agree with me that the building of strategic partnerships and alliances is crucial to the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment. I will like to end by enjoining this august body to come up with strategies that will enhance strategic partnership and alliance at the heart of our struggle.

I thank you for your kind attention.

