

## **The Evolving Role of the Military in the Peace and Security Architecture of West Africa<sup>1</sup>.**

### **Introduction**

At the end of the cold war in 1989, while other regions of the world were beginning to experience a reduction in armed and violent conflict, West Africa was engulfed in conflagrations of violent conflicts which made the region arguably the most volatile in the world. Most of the 15 countries that constitute the regional economic bloc, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were engulfed in a succession of political instability. Notable are the examples of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Casamance in Senegal, Guinea (Conakry) and Cote d'Ivoire. These conflicts were also not localized. They were almost intertwined by a number of factors producing an interconnected web of instability across the region.<sup>2</sup>

Adding to the problem of violent conflict unleashed by warlordism, the situation in the region was further compounded by endemic poverty, the massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), cross-border crimes and banditry, youth unemployment, increase in HIV/AIDS infection and the destruction and collapse of social and economic infrastructures. Entrenched corruption, lack of accountability and poor governance provided structural factors for near state collapse/failure in a number of countries in the region. During the period, the United Nations development Programme (UNDP) Human Index Report consistently listed most of the West African countries as the poorest in the world despite the fact that many of them are enormously well endowed in human, mineral, marine and agricultural resources.<sup>3</sup>

ECOWAS was created in 1975 principally to facilitate a regional economic integration programme through intra-community trade, the free movement of persons, goods and services, rights to residence and establishment by community citizens, the creation of a single monetary union and a single currency and a unified customs and tariff regime. However, it became apparent that the lofty ideals envisaged by its founding fathers could not be attained under a climate of violent conflict, socio-economic and political problems bedevilling the sub region. A shift in priorities was thus undertaken with the organization focusing more attention and resources on the promotion and restoration of peace in the sub region.

Coinciding with the end of the cold war and declining strategic interest of the west, the conflicts in the region did not receive the necessary attention from the international community. With the United Nations (UN) and the only remaining world power, the United States along with any of its western allies or former colonialists failing to intervene to stop the carnage, the regional bloc ECOWAS intervened by establishing the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). ECOMOG was deployed in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire between 1990 and 2003. Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup> Draft for Presentation at ISS Seminar, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>2</sup> Seth Appiah-Mensah; "Security is like oxygen": A Regional Security Mechanism for West Africa; US Naval War College, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Please see <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

the intervention by ECOWAS in deploying ECOMOG for peace enforcement (Liberia) and restoration of a democratically elected government (Sierra Leone) was unprecedented, the first of its kind by any sub regional organization and it relied almost entirely on its own human and material resources. The UN only stepped in to take over peace keeping duties from ECOMOG in all instances with the establishment of United Nations Mission in Liberia -UNMIL (Liberia), United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone - UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) and United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire - UNOCI (Cote d'Ivoire).

### **Defining Security**

While protecting the state and its citizens from external aggression remains a consideration, the most serious threats facing countries on the African continent at the beginning of the 21st century tend to be those that either derive from internal causes or are trans-national and collective in nature. Since the end of the cold war, the desirability of shifting from a state- and elite-focused view of security to one that places individuals at the centre of the security equation has gained increasing acceptance in many parts of the world. The concept of human security which combines elements of national security, economic development, and basic human rights with the objective of protecting people from the fear of violence is particularly relevant in Africa. Security in Africa would undeniably be served by placing people at the centre of the security equation and by finding non-violent solutions to disputes at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels. A safe and secure environment is a necessary condition for sustainable, poverty-reducing development. In the African context, it is most constructive to speak of a peace building approach to human security.<sup>4</sup>

### **The ECOWAS Peace and Security Mechanism/Architecture**

Although ECOWAS had adopted two security related protocols in 1978 (Protocol on Non Aggression) and 1981 (Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence), none had been implemented as at the time of the outbreak of the Liberian civil war. In fact both protocols were designed primarily to address external threats and aggression. The conflict served as a wake-up call for the Community to fashion its own security agenda.<sup>5</sup> Realigning the Community's priorities in favour of peace building as a foundation for economic growth and regional integration, and recognizing also the interdependence of peace and security among its member states, ECOWAS agreed to adopt a sub regional approach to conflict management in West Africa.

The need for an institutionalized and effective security mechanism was thus borne. In 1999, the Authority of Heads of State and Government which is the highest organ of ECOWAS signed the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

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<sup>4</sup> Fayemi, K. & Ball, N. (ed), Security Sector Governance in Africa: A Handbook, available at [www.cddwestafrica.org](http://www.cddwestafrica.org)

<sup>5</sup> ECOWAS Evolving Security Architecture: Looking Back to the Future, A Policy Group Seminar Jointly organized by Centre for Conflict Resolution, ECOWAS and UNOWA available at <http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za>

The Mechanism (as it is popularly referred to) relies heavily upon two International Instruments. First is Article 58 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty<sup>6</sup> which calls for strengthened cooperation between member states in the areas of Early Warning, Conflict Prevention, Peacekeeping, Cross-border Crime Control and the proliferation of small arms, amongst other things. Second is Chapter VIII of the UN Charter<sup>7</sup> which allows for regional organizations to intervene in cases of regional instability and unconstitutional changes of government, with the flexibility of informing the Security Council after troops have already been deployed.

The 1999 Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace keeping and Security supplemented by the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance therefore constitutes a comprehensive framework for addressing threats to peace and human security on a far reaching basis by addressing the core elements of conflict.

***The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security***

The institutions of ECOWAS charged with the responsibility of implementing the Mechanism include the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Mediation and Security Council, the Defence and Security Commission, and the ECOWAS Commission. A point of note is that the Authority of Heads of State and Government no longer has sole responsibility for taking decisions on key actions in the sub-region. A measure of decision-making power has been given to the Mediation and Security Council. This Council consists of nine members; seven elected by the Authority of Heads of State and the present and immediate past Chairs of the Authority.

The Mediation and Security Council deliberates at the levels of Heads of States and Government, and the Ministerial and Ambassadorial. The Council is charged with a range of tasks, which include taking decision on peace and security matters; implement policies designed to achieve conflict prevention, resolution and peacekeeping; authorizing all forms of intervention and taking decisions on the deployment of political and military missions and their mandates.

The Mediation and Security Council is supported in its work by the Defence and Security Commission, the Council of Elders, and the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

ECOMOG, which has now been formally established, will be comprised of stand-by multi-purpose modules (civilian and military) in their countries of origin and ready for immediate deployment. As stipulated in the Protocol, ECOMOG's tasks entail:

- Observation and monitoring
- Peacekeeping and restoration of peace
- Humanitarian intervention in support of humanitarian disaster

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<sup>6</sup> Full text of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty can be accessed at the ECOWAS web site [www.ecowas.int](http://www.ecowas.int)

<sup>7</sup> Please visit [www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter7.htm](http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter7.htm)

- Enforcement of sanctions including embargo
- Preventive deployment
- Peace-building, disarmament and demobilization
- Policing activities

The Protocol has also established a Peace and Security Observation System, for purposes of early warning consisting of an Observation and Monitoring Centre in the Commission headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, and four Observation and Monitoring Zones based in Cotonou (Benin), Monrovia (Liberia), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Banjul (The Gambia).

The Mechanism may be applied under a number of situations and they include the following cases:

- Aggression against a member state or the threat of it
- Conflict between several member states
- Internal conflict that threatens to result in humanitarian disaster, or poses threat to peace and security in the sub-region
- Serious violation of human rights and the rule of law
- Overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government.

***The Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance***

On 21<sup>st</sup> December 2001 in Dakar, Senegal, the Heads of States again signed an addendum to the Peace and Security Mechanism which was titled the “Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance”

Many have asked why it became necessary to have an additional protocol supplementary to the Mechanism on Peace and Security just three years into its operationalization. What were the compelling factors that necessitated this additional protocol specifically dealing with the issue of democracy and good governance? At this point it should be helpful to provide some background information on the ECOWAS efforts at ensuring peace and security in the sub region.

Following the end of the cold war and the ideological divide, the West African sub region like other regions of the world was compelled to “democratize”. There was a wave of transitions from military rule to civilian democratic governments. While some of these transitions were genuine and brought about participatory governments, others were carried out in questionable fashion. Some rather saw the transformation of military rulers to civilian rulers in what appeared to have been mostly a change of garb from military fatigues to West African traditional long flowing gowns.

Here again, because these transitions were not well managed, disputes arising from some elections which were tagged fraudulent became added canon to the already potent political climate in a number of states in the sub region. Election disputes gradually but steadily became not just catalytic factors but increasingly causative factors of violent conflict across the sub region in the last two decades across the sub region.

Once again, ECOWAS realised very quickly that rather than bringing about peace and stability for economic development and regional integration as was envisaged, the issue of democratization and the conduct of elections in particular had rather thrown up a number of new challenges. These challenges, sadly were not adequately and specifically addressed in the 1999 peace and security protocol as a conflict management mechanism. The need to therefore specifically address these issues called for a review of the 1999 peace and security protocol. The gaps identified in that protocol in tackling the problem of democratic transition through credible elections gave birth to the supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and this was signed by the Heads of State and Government in 2001.

### ***The Principles in the Supplementary Protocol***

The Protocol has two sets of principles which are aimed at promoting democracy and good governance, the rule of law and human rights in member states. It is hoped that in doing these; potential causes of violent conflicts arising from real or perceived political marginalization or exclusion, and elections disputes in member states will be minimized and better managed.

These set of principles are:

1. The Constitutional Convergence Principles which make up Section 1 of the protocol. These are a number of principles which it is expected that all member states will incorporate into their legal systems, especially their constitutions.
2. The Principles of democratic elections. These principles are specifically on elections. They are outlined in Section II, Article 2 – 10 of the Protocol.

### ***The Constitutional Convergence Principles***

The constitutional convergence principles are principles that, eventually, all ECOWAS member states are expected to incorporate into their legal systems and they include the following:

- Free, fair and transparent elections as the only legitimate means of accession to political power
- Zero tolerance of power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means
- Strict adherence to democratic principles
- Respect for human dignity and fundamental rights
- No discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion or region
- Freedom of recourse to a court of law to ensure the protection of rights
- Popular participation in decision-making
- Guarantee of the freedom of association and the right to peaceful demonstration
- Guarantee of press freedom
- Freedom to form a political party within the limits of law
- Prohibition of the formation or operation of a political party on the basis of ethnicity, race; religion or region
- The right of a political party to carry out its lawful activities and to freely participate in the electoral process
- Guarantee of the freedom of the political opposition
- The right of each member state to adopt a system of political party financing, in accordance with criteria set under the law

- Politically neutral armed forces (including the police) that operate under the command of a legally constituted political authority
- Prohibition of serving members of the armed forces from seeking elective political office
- Prohibition of all political activities and propaganda in barracks and within the armed forces

### ***The Principles of Democratic Elections***

These set of principles which are specifically on elections include the following:

- The Election Management Body (EMB) should be independent and neutral and should have the confidence of all the political actors
- No substantial modification should be made to the electoral laws during the last six (6) months before the holding of an election, except with the consent of a majority of the political actors
- Elections must be organized on the dates or at the periods fixed by the law
- Women have equal rights with men to vote and be voted for, and to hold public office at all levels of governance
- A reliable voters list must be produced, drawing upon a reliable register of births and deaths
- The voters list should be prepared in a transparent and verifiable manner, with the collaboration of the political parties
- The electorate should have access to the list of voters, whenever the need arises
- The preparation and conduct of elections and the announcement of results should be done in a transparent manner
- Adequate arrangements should be made to hear and dispose of petitions relating to the conduct of elections and the announcement of results
- Election-related civil society organizations should be involved in educating the public on the need for peaceful elections
- A candidate or party that loses an election should concede defeat in accordance with the law
- All holders of power at all levels should refrain from acts of intimidation or harassment against defeated candidates or their supporters

### ***The Mandate of ECOWAS in Elections***

Based on the foregoing principles, the protocol gives ECOWAS a number of roles in elections in member states including:

- The provision of any form of assistance for the purposes of conducting an election
- The despatching of missions to the country for the purpose of monitoring the election

The Protocol stipulates that the President of the ECOWAS Commission can despatch any one or all three of the following types of missions to any member state conducting an election:

- Fact-finding mission
- Exploratory Mission

- Observer Mission

While the task of the fact-finding mission is not defined in the protocol, the tasks of exploratory mission as defined in the protocol indicate that it is a pre-election assessment mission. Its tasks include to:

- Collect the texts governing the elections
- Gather information on the condition under which the election will be conducted
- Collect pertinent information relating to the contesting candidates or political parties
- Meet candidates; party leaders, government authorities and other relevant bodies
- Assess the status of preparations for the elections
- Gather any other useful information that may provide a clear picture of the situation in the country
- Prepare a report

Further to the exploratory mission, an observer mission may be deployed. The protocol contains guidelines relating to the composition, duration, role and procedure of the observer mission. The report of the exploratory mission is made available to the observer mission. The observer mission which should include women is composed of independent persons and nationals of member states other than the one conducting the elections. As independent persons, they are expected to serve in their individual capacities and not to represent ECOWAS or their respective countries, or the institutions for which they work.

However, in the October 2007 Parliamentary elections in Togo, the ECOWAS Commission deployed military personnel from the member states as election observers. It is not yet clear under which arrangements this deployment was carried out because the Supplementary Protocol does not provide for such a deployment. This is not only novel but brings to the fore the paradox of having the military that once upon a time derailed democracy now serving as watchdogs of the process.

### **The Military Role in Operationalizing the Mechanism**

The military has played a considerable role in the politics and governance of the sub region right from independence. Except for Senegal, all the countries in West Africa have experienced military coup d'états and have come under long periods of military rule. Beginning in Togo with the late Eyadema's overthrow of President Olympio government in 1964, nearly all of West Africa was under military rule in 1990. As such, when ECOWAS was created in 1975, it had as its founding fathers military officers, led principally by Nigeria's General Yakubu Gowon and Togo's General Gnassingbe Eyadema.

When the cold war ended and the wind of democratization began to blow over the sub region, rather than experience a change from military dictatorship as happened in Asia and South America, the case of West Africa was different as a number of military dictators simply changed their military fatigues for suits or the popular West African kaftans. This change of garb by the leadership rather than the transmutation of creed or a

transformation in governance further entrenched the culture of the might of the gun over that of the vote.

Electoral democracy which should have opened up the political space across the sub region now became a source of conflict as one election after the other was either fraudulently conducted or even annulled as was the case in 1999 in Nigeria. With the electoral door closed and without other viable options, opposition elements largely turned into rebel forces fighting for regime overthrow or exiles working for regime change in their home countries<sup>8</sup>. It was under such circumstances that the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were born, thrived and brought about the conflicts that affected the entire region.

As noted earlier, almost all of the West African states were under the rule of military officers or ex-military officers and as such the highest organ of ECOWAS, the Authority of the Heads of State and Government was largely a club or a very senior “Officers Mess”. Given the universal culture of esprit the corps that governs the military, many have argued that the intervention of ECOWAS was largely a selfish face saving endeavour rather than action intended for the overall peace and security of the sub region.

The deployment of ECOMOG what ever their motive was is not the point of discussion in this paper. It is worth noting that even as an interventionist force, ECOMOG forces were largely involved in a host of Peace Support Operations (PSOs) programmes notably Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), support for the electoral process, quick impact projects and humanitarian activities which contributed to the peace and security of the sub region. The involvement of the military in these peacekeeping roles outside their shores and the trainings they received for these broadened the perspectives and world view of the West African military, especially as it concerned their role in support of democracy and good governance<sup>9</sup>.

It also opened the way for direct military engagement in trans-national politics in the sub region. This military engagement in trans-national politics was effected with the military at two strategic levels; at the level of policy making and policy implementation.

At the level of policy making, the Authority of Heads of States and Governments was composed largely of either military or ex-military officers. At the level of implementation, ECOMOG operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d’Ivoire were classic military operations designed to stop wars or monitor ceasefires. It has been difficult to gauge the exact impact that these (the direct involvement of soldiers in both shaping and implementing policy) may have had on the concept and application of coercive diplomacy in the sub region.

What ever the shortcomings of ECOMOG as an interventionist force, and acknowledging that ECOWAS had to “think and learn on its feet” so to say, it has developed comparative

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<sup>8</sup> ECOWAS, the European Union, and UNOWA, “ECOWAS-EU-UNOWA Framework of Action for Peace and Security,” Statement published by UNOWA, May 2005

<sup>9</sup> The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues; Robin Luckham in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2. (Sep., 1994)

advantage in the area of peace building (particularly peacekeeping) over the other RECs on the Continent and ECOMOG could be considered a model for the Pan-African Stand-by Force (ASF) being put together for rapid deployment in peace keeping with each of the RECs contributing one brigade. All fifteen member states of ECOWAS have pledged one battalion each as contribution to the establishment of the ECOWAS force consisting of specially trained and equipped units of national armies ready to be deployed at short notice.

The ECOMOG force is to be used in four cases: first, aggression or conflict within a member state; second, a conflict between two or more member states; third, internal conflicts that threaten to trigger a humanitarian disaster, pose a serious threat to sub-regional peace and security, result in serious and massive violation of human rights, and/or follow the overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically-elected government; and fourth, any other situation that the Mediation and Security Council deems appropriate.

In building this force, periodic training exercises to enhance the cohesion of its troops and compatibility of its equipment have been taking place. One of such trainings tagged ACOTA, took place in November – December 2006. Soldiers from the ECOWAS member states have also been undertaking training exchange programmes in West African military training institutions, as well as external training involving the UN and the AU. The Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra is providing operational level training; Nigeria's National Defence College in Abuja is providing training at the strategic level; while a centre in Mali is providing tactical training.

In Operationalizing the ECOWAS peace and security framework, the military has been involved in both policy formulation and implementation as discussed earlier. These have been overt and subject to public discourse.

However, at a less overt level, the military has also been involved in other measures taken to operationalize the framework including the secondment of military officers to the Commission as staff of the Mission Planning Cell in the Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) and the deployment of military personnel as election observers in Togo.

The Early Warning Mechanism: ECOWAS has established the ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) which comprises an Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) housed at the Commission and fed by four zonal bureaus for conflict prevention where data based on early warning indicators are collated. The Mission Planning Cell in the OMC is manned by military officers seconded to the ECOWAS Commission from member states armed forces to give professional military advice to staff of the Commission in this regard.

The deployment of military election observers by ECOWAS in the October 2007 parliamentary elections in Togo is another pace setter. As ironic as it does appear, a contextual analysis of the reasons for such a deployment and its significance may provide for better understanding and appreciation of the dynamics of the evolution of military engagement in securing a more peaceful and democratic West Africa under the operationalization of the ECOWAS peace and security mechanism.

Following the sudden death of President Gnassingbe Eyadema, the Prime Minister Koffi Sama called upon the security agencies to maintain law and order. He also announced that all the land borders and air space had been closed, along with the international airport in the capital, Lome. The security agencies consisting of the army, navy, air force, police and the gendarmerie led by the Chief of Defence Staff, General Zakari Nandja swore an oath of allegiance to Faure Gnassingbe as the new Head of State subverting the Togolese constitution.<sup>10</sup>

ECOWAS qualified the constitutional machinations as nothing short of a military coup and a flagrant violation of the ECOWAS protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (signed in 1999 in Lome, Togo) and the additional protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance.<sup>11</sup> Bowing to pressure, Faure Eyadema stepped down and elections were conducted on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2005. The elections were characterized by vote rigging and other irregularities, some perpetuated by the military<sup>12</sup>.

It is against this background, the Inter-Togolese Dialogue facilitated by President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso and the need to ensure a more credible electoral process as enshrined in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance that ECOWAS decided in its engagement to field military personnel as election observers during the parliamentary elections of October 2007.

As part of its preventive diplomacy and mediation activities, ECOWAS utilizes the services of former military leaders as part of what is known as the Council of the Wise, an Organ under the Mechanism made up of eminent political, traditional and religious men and women. In recent times, Nigeria's former Head of State General Abdusalami Abubakar has been instrumental under this Organ in facilitating the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Liberia and the retired Ghanaian General Obeng was instrumental in keeping post election peace and stability after both rounds of the presidential elections in Sierra Leone last year. Indeed, General Obeng was head of the ECOWAS Election Observation Missions for the elections.<sup>13</sup>

### **Implications on West Africa's Peace and Security**

Over the last decade, a positive trend signalled by the total disengagement of the military from political control of the state at the national level with all ECOWAS member states under the democratically elected leaders has been observed. At the sub regional level, a drastic reduction in the number of armed conflicts have also been witnessed so that at the moment there are no ECOWAS forces deployed in any member state for the purposes of peace keeping. What are the implications of these on the present and the future of the peace and security landscape of the sub region?

Obviously, it is now evident that ascension to power via any undemocratic means is no longer acceptable or tolerable across the sub region. With every country in West Africa

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<sup>10</sup> WARN Policy Brief "Transitional Crisis in Togo" February 11, 2005: [www.wanep.org](http://www.wanep.org)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> See WACSOE Election Observation Mission Report on Togo at [www.wacsof.org](http://www.wacsof.org)

<sup>13</sup> See ECOWAS Press Releases at [www.ecowas.int](http://www.ecowas.int)

under democratic governance, we are seeing the armed forces submitting to democratic control. In a number of countries in the sub region, the security sector continues to undergo either reforms or transformation in order to reposition them for a less involvement in partisan politics.

With the security sector reforms/transformation, there is an ongoing re-professionalization of our armed forces and paramilitary services across the sub region thereby better positioning them to safeguard both the internal and external territorial integrity of the state. With professionalism and their return to the barracks, the military is now better able to guarantee democratic stability by protecting and defending legitimate and democratic institutions.

Their training and participation in peace keeping beyond the sub region has also exposed members of our armed forces and police to international human rights standards, norms and the respect for rule of law. As it was with the so called “bush fire” effect during the immediate post independence era where the military usurped political power by coup d’etats from one country in the sub region to another, there is considerable level of peer influence at national and sub regional levels with members of national armed forces striving to excel above the others in professionalism, respect for the rule of law and abeyance to constitutionally constituted authority.

### **Challenges for Sustainability**

In order to keep the sub region on the right path towards sustainable peace for regional economic development, a number of issues necessarily have to be addressed. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Given inherent differences among the military services in the different ECOWAS member states, it will be necessary to seek means of harmonizing these differences in order to have a common and acceptable doctrine for the ECOWAS Stand-by Force. Unified training and doctrine will be relevant and essential to the concept of operations envisaged under the protocol. This might also require separate planning for preventive deployment, peacekeeping, enforcement and multi-functional operations.
- Putting together the Stand-by Force with a brigade size is quite a gigantic task that requires considerable and reliable logistics capability, and this may pose a huge challenge considering that ordinarily member states have their own similar internal challenges. The establishment of the Logistics Depot at the Hastings Airport in Freetown, Sierra Leone, with the support of donors is therefore a welcome development. ECOWAS should ensure that the available infrastructure and equipment so far available at the depot is secured, well maintained and put to appropriate use in support of the ECOWAS force.
- The issue of command and control has to be clearly articulated such that any future mission has to be under the control and coordination of the ECOWAS Commission. The ECOWAS Secretariat should be the nerve-centre for initiation and implementation of peace operations, and political control must rest with ECOWAS and not with any single member state as was the case with ECOMOG forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone giving credence to criticisms that the forces were dominated by Nigeria, resulting in a lack of sub regional unity and depriving the force of important legitimacy in fulfilling its tasks. The ECOMOG force must be under the operational control

of ECOWAS Commission in Abuja and not field commanders as was the case with ECOMOG.

- Troop contribution and build up for the ECOWAS Force should be stepped up and this can be achieved with the necessary political will on the part of member states. ECOWAS has set the pace and is well ahead of establishing its own brigade towards the formation of the Pan-African Stand-by Force (ASF) and the momentum needs to be kept.
- Even though the issue of HIV/AIDS was not mentioned in the Mechanism, it is important that sufficient attention is devoted to this important issue because HIV/AIDS has major implications for conflict management efforts in West Africa. Illness and deaths of soldiers from the virus infection could result in operational inefficiency and the risk of these troops spreading the virus among civilian populations at home is also high. ECOWAS has to develop an HIV/AIDS policy for the West African Stand-by Force.

### **Conclusions**

In order to maximize the gains of this evolution for the deepening of democracy, sustainable peace and security of the sub region, it is important to develop civilian standby capabilities for deployment alongside the military component as is the case with the UN. This would ensure that there is a visible civilian oversight of any peace support operations, prevent the recurrence of disturbing human rights violations that took place under ECOMOG and also ensure sustainability of future ECOWAS interventions.

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