



Subregional Office for West Africa

Meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism  
for West Africa

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**Report of the meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism  
for West Africa**

## A. Background

1. A meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa was held in Dakar on 27 September 2017. The meeting was attended by the focal points of the regional economic communities and the directors, regional directors and deputy directors of United Nations agencies and programmes based in Dakar.

2. With its origins in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa), the goal of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa is to promote coordination and collaboration among the entities of the United Nations system and the partner organizations that support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member States.

3. With regard to the African region, the General Assembly, by its resolutions 57/2, 57/7 and 61/296, made the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) the framework for action and support for the continent's development. It also directed the agencies and programmes of the United Nations system to support the implementation of NEPAD programmes, including through the formulation of joint projects at the regional level.<sup>1</sup> For that purpose, RCM-Africa was established and structured into nine thematic clusters that are aligned with the development priorities of African States as indicated in the NEPAD programme: (1) development of water, energy, transport and information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure; (2) governance; (3) environment, population and urbanization; (4) science and technology; (5) peace and security; (6) agriculture, food security and rural development; (7) human resources development, employment and HIV/AIDS; (8) industry, trade and market access; and (9) outreach and communication.

4. The main objective of RCM-Africa is to enhance the coherence and synergies among the activities of organizations within the United Nations system, with a view to optimizing those interventions. To that end, the Regional Coordination Mechanism has entrusted the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) with the task of mission and secretariat coordination at the regional and subregional levels. The ECA subregional offices, with their mandate of promoting integration and development programmes in Africa, are responsible for convening meetings in that regard. It is in that context that the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa was established in 2013.

5. At its first meeting, held in Dakar on 11 November 2013, the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa identified six thematic clusters and developed a matrix of activities, with the latter being refined during the second meeting of Subregional Coordination Mechanism, in 2014. The meetings held in 2013 and 2014 led to the adoption of a regional platform for support to ECOWAS. The platform is rooted in six areas of focus for joint action: (1) governance, peace and security and humanitarian action (governance, democracy, human rights, peace and security, humanitarian action, capacity-building and statistics); (2) economic integration (free movement, trade, macroeconomic convergence, policy harmonization and single currency); (3) development of infrastructure (transport, energy and new ICTs); (4) human development and gender equality (education, research and innovation, health and population, women, youth and employment, sport and culture); (5) agriculture and food security, water and the environment (agriculture, food and nutrition security, resilience, water and sanitation, environment and climate change); and (6) development of the private sector, industry and mines (private sector development, industry, mines and oil).

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<sup>1</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 57/2 and 57/7.

6. The meeting of the thematic groups (third meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa), held in June 2015, had as its objective the identification of constraints on and bottlenecks in the operationalization of the Mechanism and to of strategies to remove them, both on the part of the Mechanism secretariat and that of United Nations agencies and programmes, along with other stakeholders. Representatives of regional and subregional offices of United Nations agencies and programmes, in particular those working in West Africa, such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), also took part in the process. To those, one should add regional economic communities such as ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Participants at the meeting also identified activities that could be quickly coordinated, including activities to provide support to the Sahel project, to address the demographic dividend, to provide support for countries affected by the Ebola virus disease and those of the Mano River Union, to strengthen the civil registry system, to combat statelessness and to provide support for the "Regional Integration Committee", in which a number of intergovernmental organizations are involved, through a platform for intergovernmental organizations in West Africa.

7. That meeting, restricted to heads of thematic clusters and subclusters, demonstrated the importance of institutional focal points for the operationalization of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa and served as a call to various stakeholders to identify their representatives within the Mechanism. In response, a majority of United Nations agencies and programmes designated their focal points for the various thematic clusters. In order to consolidate progress and unite the agencies and programmes around a few flagship initiatives, the Subregional Office for West Africa organized a meeting of Mechanism focal points in 2016.

8. In 2017, a meeting of focal points was held in the context of the gradual abandonment of thematic clusters as an organizing principle, given that they had produced mixed results. In addition, the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa has faced a lack of understanding of its role, giving rise to the perception of it being in competition with the United Nations Development Group. That issue, seen across the continent, prompted the heads of United Nations agencies to hold the eighteenth meeting of RCM-Africa as a joint meeting (first joint meeting) with the United Nations Development Group. The meeting, held on 25 and 26 March 2017 in Dakar, confirmed the need to ensure the complementarity of actions taken by the two mechanisms.

9. At the subregional level, complementarity will take the form of using the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa as a tool for coordinating the work carried out by United Nations agencies in support of subregional activities. Emphasis will be placed on collaboration in the implementation of joint projects, in place of the system for alignment along thematic clusters at the continental level.

## **B. Objectives of the meeting**

10. The main objective of the 2017 meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa was to promote greater synergy among and effectiveness of activities, through the implementation of joint programmes and projects in support of existing intergovernmental organizations in West Africa.

11. The specific objectives addressed at the meeting were the following:

(a) To identify ways and means to strengthen the coordination of activities of partners in the subregion;

(b) To share information on ongoing joint projects and those in the planning phase with a view to bringing about the participation of additional stakeholders and agencies;

(c) To keep all members of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism equally well informed, in particular in respect of changes on the continent within the framework of RCM-Africa.

### **C. Meeting format**

12. The Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa and the Coordinator of the Community Development Programme of ECOWAS each delivered a statement at the opening of the work of the plenary. Some 20 participants attended the opening ceremony of the plenary. Participants came from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, the Subregional Office for West Africa, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), IOM, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Mano River Union and ECOWAS. The list of participants is annexed to the present report (see annexes). During the plenary, the secretariat presented the new programme of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa. ECOWAS made a presentation on its priority framework and its future activities.

13. The plenary session was chaired by the Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, Dimitri Sanga. During the deliberations, participants reviewed the status of implementation of joint initiatives in the West African subregion relating to civil registries, country profiles, United Nations support to the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the activities of ECOWAS and those of the Mano River Union.

14. It was determined that the duplication of efforts and interventions needed to be avoided in order to increase the efficiency in the use of resources by the main regional economic community, ECOWAS.

15. The goal was to determine how to use the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa while taking into account what had already been done by each organization and working towards a synergy of interventions.

16. The participants updated the ECOWAS road map and agreed to also update the mapping of ECOWAS interventions, through harmonization with international and regional programmes (the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union), with the goal of creating umbrella projects. Doing so would require a shift from the intervention-by-silo approach to an expansion and strengthening of partnerships through joint projects and activities. On the basis of previous examples of cooperation, participants suggested

that the focus be on cross-border projects, such as the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registry and Vital Statistics Systems, the strategy of ECOWAS and the Group of Five for the Sahel and the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, cooperation between UNOWAS and ECOWAS, and country profiles.

17. Lastly, participants reiterated the need to harmonize the various existing subregional forums for consultation in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **D. Outcomes of the meeting**

18. The outcomes of the meeting were as follows:

(a) Identified key bottlenecks in the work of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa and the proposal of solutions;

(b) Reviewed the status of implementation of the main umbrella activities;

(c) Highlighted the centrality of the Subregional Office for West Africa in the functioning of the Mechanism;

(d) Inventoried the joint activities of various organizations, in collaboration with ECOWAS, to identify priority actions for the region, in accordance with the timelines of the various entities involved in joint projects and programmes.

#### **E. Implications for the Subregional Office for West Africa**

19. On the basis of discussion held and taking into account the bottlenecks, ECA should undertake the following actions:

(a) Propose a framework that would allow for the identification of and follow up on priority umbrella activities;

(b) Officially inform the heads of United Nations agencies and programmes involved in the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa, with a view to obtaining their active participation in the Mechanism and their ownership of the process; doing so will require the involvement of the Subregional Office for West Africa at the meetings of the teams of regional directors and the United Nations Development Group;

(c) Share the report of RCM-Africa, catalogue everything that is being done within the Subregional Coordination Mechanism and share that with the United Nations Development Group;

(d) Make the Subregional Coordination Mechanism platform effective and functional;

(e) Ensure the synergy between the regional and subregional mechanisms.

## **F. Outlook**

20. With a view to the revitalization and effective operationalization of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa, the following activities are envisaged:

- (a) Next meeting of Mechanism to be held in 2018;
- (b) Meetings of actors in the same thematic cluster who are involved in a joint programme or project to be held on an as-needed basis;
- (c) Proposal by the Subregional Office for West Africa of a framework of umbrella activities in line with the six thematic clusters previously identified;
- (d) Virtual platform of the Mechanism for exchanges and collaboration among partners to be made effective and functional;
- (e) Capacity-building needs relating to public and regional policies to be identified, needs which could be met by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

## **G. Recommendations**

21. The participants in the meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism for West Africa recommend that the Subregional Office for West Africa take the following actions:

- (a) Propose a framework of umbrella activities in line with the six thematic clusters previously identified;
- (b) Turn the Subregional Coordination Mechanism into an effective and functional platform;
- (c) Ensure solid collaboration between RCM-Africa and the Subregional Coordination Mechanism;
- (d) Convene the next meeting of the Subregional Coordination Mechanism in 2018;
- (e) Hold, as needed, meetings of actors in the same thematic cluster who are involved in a joint programme or project;
- (f) Initiate an inventory of the joint activities of various organizations, in collaboration with ECOWAS, to determine the priority actions for the region, in accordance with the timelines of the various stakeholders and actors involved in joint projects or programmes;
- (g) Make effective and functional a virtual platform for the Mechanism for exchanges and collaboration among various partners;
- (h) Identify capacity-building needs relating to public and regional policies, which could be met by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

Annexes  
**List of participants\***

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\* Lists of participants are issued as received.

**Template for records of the meetings of the thematic clusters**

Thematic cluster XXX			
Venue and date of the meeting			
<b>Agenda</b> 1. 2. 3.			
Discussion	Action	Person in charge	Date due
1. Agenda item/discussion topic			
2. Agenda item/discussion topic			

**List of participants**

First and last name	Entity	Telephone	E-mail:

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