

STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. ADAMA BARROW

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT

**THE 64TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ECOWAS
AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

10TH DECEMBER 2023

ABUJA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Your Excellency, the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies, Distinguished Heads and Representatives of ECOWAS Commission, (UNOWAS) and AU

Honourable Representatives of other International Organisations and Development Partners,

Distinguished Delegates,

While expressing warmest congratulations to Your Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for ably steering the affairs of the ECOWAS Authority, I extend, through you, sincere gratitude to the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the hospitality accorded to my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate our dear brother, His Excellency, Ambassador Joseph N. Boakai, on his recent election as President of Liberia.

Similarly, I pay tribute to our colleague and dear brother, His Excellency, President George Manneh Weah for his remarkable show of statesmanship, by gracefully accepting the results of the last Presidential Election re-run. My delegation also commends the citizens of Liberia for conducting the elections peacefully.

Your Excellency,

Having listened to the reports presented today, I am bound to express appreciation to you and to His Excellency, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, as well as the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for all the excellent pre-Summit sessions.

My delegation endorses the recommendations in the reports, as they are meant to consolidate our resolve and efforts to enhance regional integration and the desired transformation of our Community.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the progress reported, recent political developments in the sub-region make it imperative to improve our political space and governance frameworks in order to mitigate instability, insecurity, and violence. The recent Presidential Elections and positive participation of the electorate in Liberia demonstrate the potential for the subregion to successfully uphold the principles of good governance, peaceful constitutional change of government, and the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman,

As a Community, it is vital that we intensify efforts to build strong and resilient economies. In this respect, my government continues to promote suitable governance reforms and regulatory frameworks in accordance with international standards and best practices.

Against this background, we are implementing a Medium-Term Economic Fiscal Framework (2023-2026) for improved macro-fiscal stability, along with a Green Recovery - Focused National Development Plan (2023 - 2027).

The inter-dependence of our economies calls for us to nurture and fully utilise the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework. Certainly, if exploited wisely, this arrangement could facilitate and promote the industrialisation of the sub-region. This makes it necessary to put more emphasis on addressing the challenges that hinder intra-community trade. The sooner we resolve the barriers, the better for us all.

To take greater advantage of the AfCFTA, however, we have to accelerate arrangements for the implementation of a Single Currency for the Community. I urge that we rededicate ourselves to this very strategic objective.

Mr. Chairman,

My government remains fully committed to the regional instruments, protocols, and arrangements on the free movement of people and goods. Yet, as the situation shows, a critical and unfortunate issue linked to the free movement of people is irregular migration.

This was discussed at length during our 63rd Ordinary Session, and pertinent decisions were adopted. Regretfully, it appears that the situation has become worse and unbearable.

In response, I recommend that the Authority launches a special study on the matter. A key objective of this should be to develop and implement a common sub-regional migration policy and related programmes to mitigate the root causes and impact of this huge challenge.

Mr. Chairman,

On the political situation in the sub-region, we must re-commit to the implementation of the roadmaps and transition processes and programmes for the re-establishment of democratic governance and constitutional rule in the relevant member states.

Regarding the recent breach of security in Sierra Leone, my government strongly condemns the act, and The Gambia stands in solidarity with the Government and People of Sierra Leone. We reassure them of our support in their quest to strengthen democratic governance in their nation.

Mr. Chairman,

It is worth emphasising that to preserve and strengthen democracy and the rule of law, dialogue, and other means of preventive diplomacy, as tools to address our regional challenges, remain critical. It is from this vintage point that we can fruitfully foster peace, security, stability, and development within the ECOWAS Region.

Mr. Chairman,

My government continues to work, in consultation with all stakeholders, to nurture and safeguard the existing peaceful and stable environment in The Gambia. To achieve this objective, we place high priority on our ongoing reform programmes, including the Security Sector Reform (SSR), transitional justice agenda, and promotion of the rule of law. In view of this, my Government renews its commitment to work with the ECOWAS Commission in fast-tracking the SSR.

I seize this opportunity to thank ECOWAS, ECOMIG Mission and Troop contributing countries and partners for the support in maintaining peace and stability in The Gambia. Also, I encourage you to accompany us in our efforts for sustainable peace and security in the Smiling Coast.

I reassure this Summit that we are devoted to implementing reform programmes that enhance effective performance, operational efficiency, and judicious financial management to attain our national goals and targets. Importantly also, implementation of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparation Commission (TRRC) recommendations is on course.

Furthermore, The Gambia Government is working with relevant stakeholders to finalise a National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Bill to establish an effective and functional system.

In view of these efforts, my delegation recognises and applauds the complementary support of our development partners, significantly including ECOWAS, for the achievements registered thus far. We are grateful to all of you.

Thank you for your attention.