

The Role of ECOWAS in Peace, Security, and Sustainable Development in West Africa Region

Professor P. E Agbebaku*, Osimen Goddy Uwa**, Professor, J.O Fayeye ***

Department of political Science, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma- Nigeria*

Department of Political Science & International Relations Achievers-University, Owo**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Achievers University, Owo , Nigeria***

Email Address: goddos4real@gmail.com, Phone- +234-8033-720-666

Abstract

Of the many challenges facing Africa, the quest for peace, security and sustainable development is undoubtedly the most pressing issues. So many African countries are still trapped in a vicious circle of conflict and insecurity with its attendant consequence. The African Union (AU), ECOWAS and its people are deeply concerned about the emerging trend of election-related conflicts and violence, the resurgence of coups d'état and other forms of unconstitutional change of government occurring on the continent including the manipulations of constitutions and electoral laws in violation of constitutional provisions, as well as the Boko Haram wave of attacks in Nigeria. The consequences of armed conflicts in Africa's socio-economic development have been very glaring. The effects of armed conflicts as well as other types of violence continue to establish the true extent of this interconnectedness. The resurgence of buying and selling of human beings or human trafficking in sub Sahara Africa has shown the level of insecurity and poverty in the continent. Africa has witnessed a number of long-term, severe and, in some cases, inter-related crises and violent conflicts. The mass proliferation of arms in the Sahel-Sahara belt in Africa following the Libyan uprising constitutes a major challenge for peace and security. Peace, security and sustainable development in Africa cannot be taken for granted. The most significant issue that brings to bear the establishment of ECOWAS was based on member States to cooperate among themselves for the purpose of promoting economic growth and integration. However, after many years the sub- regional establishment still faced with challenges in relation to sustainable development, peace and security matters to which it was established .It on this backdrop, therefore, the paper look at the role of ECOWAS in creating an enabling environment

where peace and security is sustainable for West African states to engineer sustainable development through regional integration and economic co-operation among the countries in West Africa. The methodology used in this work is review of previous literature and the use of content analysis which will also provide useful information on how peace, security and sustainable development can be achieved in the region of West Africa. The findings from this study reviews that, peace and security sustainability can only be guaranteed when the West African States employ the measures that would lead to economic growth and development of the region through provision of job opportunities to the youths, provision of adequate and trained security personnel that would help to monitor the porous border, Proper mechanisms for conflict resolution, management and peace- building to foster and promote peace within the region, transparency and accountability in governance and good leadership to foster growth and development in the region of ECOWAS community and among others.

Keywords: *ECOWAS, Peace, Security, Sustainable Development, West Africa*

Introduction

Of the many challenges facing Africa, the quest for peace, security and sustainable development is undoubtedly the most pressing issues. So many African countries are still trapped in a vicious circle of conflict and insecurity with its attendant consequence. The African Union (AU), ECOWAS and its people are deeply concerned about the emerging trend of election-related conflicts and violence, the resurgence of coups d'état and other forms of unconstitutional change of government occurring on the continent including the manipulations of constitutions and electoral laws in violation of constitutional provisions, as well as the Boko Haram wave of attacks in Nigeria. The consequences of armed conflicts in Africa's socio-economic development have been very glaring. The effects of armed conflicts as well as other types of violence continue to establish the true extent of this interconnectedness. The resurgence of buying and selling of human beings or human trafficking in sub Sahara Africa has shown the level of insecurity and poverty in the continent. Africa has witnessed a number of long-term, severe and, in some cases, inter-related crises and violent conflicts. The mass proliferation of arms in the Sahel-Sahara belt in Africa following the Libyan uprising constitutes a major challenge for peace and security.

Peace, security and sustainable development in Africa cannot be taken for granted. The most significant issue that brings to bear the establishment of ECOWAS was based on member States to cooperate among themselves for the purpose of promoting economic growth and integration.

The West Africa region, 4.7 million square kilometers in area, is more than twice the size of Western Europe. Its 6,000 kilometer coastal arc, which stretches from the upper reaches of Angola in South-West Africa to the lower reaches of Western Sahara to the north and washed by the Atlantic Ocean, embodies its value as an area of global geostrategic importance as well as its vulnerable security. The Gulf of Guinea is home to huge hydrocarbon deposits, making it a future resource to meet global energy needs. Nigeria's proven oil and gas reserves are estimated at 40-50 billion barrels. Indeed, the recent oil finds (estimated at 3 billion barrels off Cape Three Points in Ghana), reserves in Cote d'Ivoire, and the optimistic prognosis in the Mano River Union (MRU) basin and Mali, are an indication that almost all the ECOWAS countries sit on huge oil and gas deposits. Besides its hydrocarbon riches, the Gulf is also a reservoir of rich fish stocks. Inland, West Africa is endowed with precious and strategic natural minerals, including gold, uranium, diamonds, and titanium. The lush, but dwindling, tropical rainforest belt stretching from Guinea in the west to Cameroon in the east accounts for more than two thirds of global cocoa needs, while further north, the Savannah and Sahel regions are a major source of cotton, peanuts, and Shea butter. These vast resources have not really reflected in the lives of the people in the region or metamorphous in forms of development in the region, rather is a region full of common insecurity, violence conflicts, assorted kinds of border crime, poverty, unemployment and among others.

Since the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 as a regional organization in the West African sub-region, the expectations of the people goes beyond having a government in place in their respective countries, but seeing results for the purpose of its establishment. Within the sub-region, there are countries that went through civil war, had conflicts within states, and had military regimes as well as democratic governance. There are challenges that arose from lack of transparency and accountability, mismanagement of public funds, poverty, as well as unemployment of the citizenry. The role of states here covers not only signing of treaties but ensuring good economic governance where the people are well taken care of in relation to proper management of resources in order to promote national economic growth and development.

As such, the stability and growth of the economic policies that would ensure both the development of the people through provision of services such as jobs for the people, infrastructure, and accountability on the part of the government towards her role in developing the state, is what the people expect from their leadership. Furthermore, failure on the part of the government to meet the expectations of its citizens creates an environment for insecurity.

The original ECOWAS agenda also included a framework for solving inter-state conflicts. Even so, these conflicts throughout the region in the 1990s caught the region and ECOWAS unprepared. In the role of a regional organization, ECOWAS had to respond to the conflicts, shifting its focus away from the original agenda of commerce and economic cooperation. The ad hoc lead up and deployment of ECOWAS forces offered lessons for the future and ECOWAS created a framework mechanism for responding to conflict resolution, prevention, and peacekeeping. In the second Liberia crisis this was applied and seemed to be more effective, professional and organized than previous responses.

However, ECOWAS remained weak in the prevention phase of the conflict cycle and insufficient capacity continues to limit its post-conflict capacities in the region. ECOWAS therefore welcomed the UN Peacebuilding Commission assistance.

Today ECOWAS functions on a regular platform with four pillars: Peace and Security, Developing Infrastructure, Policy harmonization (to facilitate trade) and Good Corporate Governance. One highlight of its current activities is the West Africa Customs Union which will go into effect January 1, 2008. It will integrate regional trade and increase external trade of processed goods, thereby creating jobs. A good deal of emphasis is placed on helping member states understand that adhering to the supra-national level will bring benefits at the national level.

Conceptual Issues

Security:

The concept of security has undergone a transition from traditional conceptualization to a non-traditional meaning, traditionally; security management was the unilateral function of the state especially if we consider the intellectual view(s) of some political theorists like Thomas Hobbes

who argued that the essence of a state is to provide law and order, which are attained through (effective) security management.

However, in an attempt by the state to actualize the purpose of its creation (through social contract), it has found it necessary to acquire legitimate use of force (violence). This idea has made security issue a function of effective monopoly of violence, which the state applies to engender strict conformity and complaisance to state laws by the peoples for effective security management. But, in contemporary time, definition of security goes beyond the traditional military ways of protecting the state against internal and external aggression. The fact is that since the end of the cold war, security management has assumed a new dimension, external threat to security resulting from international hostilities and aggression that characterised the cold war era has been replaced with non-traditional security threats like information warfare, drug trafficking, nuclear pollutions, disease epidemics like HIV-AIDS, corruption, human trafficking, (internal) insurgency among others. Nevertheless, this situation has led to multidimensional approach in security discourse and management. Now, governments have now realised that they can no longer monopolise the business of security in local domains as well as the world at large. This has led to extending the security community to include private players in security business, NGOS and above all the civilians take the centre stage in security management. Well, on the question of definition of the term security, it is not a mischief to say that there are various definitions of the term (security) without any consensus among scholars in their conceptualization. And thus, to some, security can be defined as: -----an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; Enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have Access to resources and the basic necessities of life; And inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing (see South Africa White Paper on Defence, 1996). Not only in terms of the internal security of the State, but also in terms of secure systems of Food health, money and trade (Waever 1995). To begin with, it is worth defining what is actually meant by the term 'security'. Neither security – nor its opposite, insecurity – are objective or measurable feelings; they are, as Wood and Shearing (2007) argue, 'imagined'. 'Security' is used to cover a much wider range of conditions than the most salient examples relating to crime. It is used in international relations, and in relation to welfare payments. In French, *sécurité* is used even more broadly, indicating safety as well as security in the English sense. Security is also a 'natural' process. There are

many examples in the natural world of animals, plants and even viruses developing security tactics by pursuing certain behaviours or even by building security structures. Possibly the best capture of the essence of security is by Zedner (2003b: 155, cited in Wood and Shearing, 2007: 4). Security is both a state of being and a means to that end. As a state of being, security suggests two quite distinct objective and subjective conditions. And as an objective condition, it takes a number of possible forms. First, it is the condition of being without threat: the hypothetical state of absolute security. Secondly, it is defined by the neutralization of threats: the state of 'being protected from'. Thirdly, it is a form of avoidance or non-exposure to danger... As a subjective condition, security again suggests both the positive condition of feeling safe, and freedom from anxiety or apprehension defined negatively by reference to insecurity. Security implies a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and without fear of disturbance or injury Robert & Gion (2004). It is also important to recognise the growing body of work that sees security in a much broader framework, as 'human security' (Commission on Human Security, 2003). The UN Commission examined a wide range of insecurities based in legal, environmental, economic, educational and health contexts as well as in 'traditional' security areas and explored their links to one another. As Kofi Annan argue that; human security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, and access to good education and healthcare and ensuring each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore national, security. (Commission on Human Security, 2003: 4)

Abraham Maslow describes an insecure person as a person who "perceives the world as a threatening jungle and most human beings as dangerous and selfish; feels rejected and isolated person, anxious and hostile; is generally pessimistic and unhappy; shows signs of tension and conflict, tends to turn inward; is troubled by guilt-feelings, has one or another disturbance of self-esteem; tends to be neurotic; and is generally selfish and egocentric".

ECOWAS regional arrangements for security in the sub-region are fully spelt out in Article 58 of the Treaty:

- (1) Member states undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of people, stability and security within the region.
- (2) In pursuit of these objectives, member states undertake to cooperate with the Community in establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts, paying particular regard to the need to:
 - (a) Maintain periodic and regular consultations between national border administration authorities.
 - (b) Establish local or national joint commissions to examine any problems encountered in relations between neighbouring states;
 - (c) Encourage exchanges and cooperation between communities, townships and administrative regions;
 - (d) Organise meetings between relevant ministries on various aspects of inter-state relations;
 - (e) Employ where appropriate, good offices, conciliation, meditation and other methods of peaceful settlement by regions.
 - (f) Establish a regional peace and security observational system and peacekeeping forces where appropriate; and
 - (g) Provide, where necessary and at the request of member states, assistance to member states for the observation of democratic elections.

These policy responses to security challenges facing West African nations are not working as expected, because the capacity to implement these laudable objectives are lacking (Eselebor, 2013).

Concepts of Development:

Development means “improvement in country’s economic and social conditions”. More specially, it refers to improvements in way of managing an area’s natural and human resources. In order to create wealth and improve people’s lives.

Dudley Seers while elaborating on the meaning of development suggests that while there can be value judgements on what is development and what is not, it should be a universally acceptable aim of development to make for conditions that lead to a realisation of the potentials of human personality.

Seers outlined several conditions that can make for achievement of this aim:

- i. The capacity to obtain physical necessities, particularly food;
- ii. A job (not necessarily paid employment) but including studying, working on a family farm or keeping house;
- iii. Equality, which should be considered an objective in its own right;
- iv. Participation in government;
- v. Belonging to a nation that is truly independent, both economically and politically; and
- vi. Adequate educational levels (especially literacy).

The people are held to be the principal actors in human scale development. Respecting the diversity of the people as well as the autonomy of the spaces in which they must act converts the present day object person to a subject person in the human scale development. Development of the variety that we have experienced has largely been a top-down approach where there is little possibility of popular participation and decision making.

Human scale development calls for a direct and participatory democracy where the state gives up its traditional paternalistic and welfarist role in favour of a facilitator in enacting and consolidating people's solutions flowing from below. "Empowerment" of people takes development much ahead of simply combating or ameliorating poverty. In this sense development seeks to restore or enhance basic human capabilities and freedoms and enables people to be the agents of their own development. In the process of capitalistic development and leading national economy towards integration into foreign markets, even politically democratic states are apt to effectively exclude the vast masses from political and economic decision-

making. The state itself evolves into a national oligarchy hedged with authoritarian and bureaucratic structures and mechanisms that inhibit social participation and popular action.

The limited access of the majority to social benefits and the limited character of participation of the masses can often not be satisfactorily offset by the unsuccessful and weak redistributive policies of the government. Powerful economic interest groups set the national agenda of development, often unrepresentative of the heterogeneous and diverse nature of our civil society making for a consolidation and concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few.

Also, a focus on people and the masses implies that there could be many different roads to development and self-reliance. The slogans “human centred development (Sen,1973),the development of people integrated development”, all call for a more inclusive and sensitive approach to fundamental social, economic and political changes involved in development such that all aspects of life of a people, their collectivity, their own history and consciousness, and their relations with others make for a balanced advancement.

The adoption of a basic needs approach with the concept of endogenous development make for a development agenda that is universally applicable while at the same time allowing for country specific particularities to be given due account. The challenge of human scale development is to nurture diversity instead of being threatened by it, to develop processes of political and economic decentralisation, to strengthen democratic, indigenous traditions and institutions and to encourage rather than repress emerging social movements which reflect the people’s need for autonomy and space. The fruits of economic development may be distributed more equitably if local spaces are protected, micro- organisations are facilitated and the diverse collective identities that make up the social body are recognised and represented. Greater control of popular masses over environment is a must. In fact this concept of development seeks for the civil society rather than the state to own up and nurture development, so that the role of social actors is enhanced.

Social and Human Development, therefore necessarily requires a unified approach, integrating the economic and social components in plans, policies and programmes for people’s betterment. The challenge is to simultaneously integrate cross sectoral and regional developmental needs as

well as to make for a participative development. The issues of environment, pollution, women, habitat, hunger and employment have come to the fore one by one and continue to require public and institutional attention along with resource allocations. Two major contemporary concerns that require focus in any development initiative are that of human security and sustainability.

We need to ensure that development does not mean social dislocation, violence and war and that we meet “the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Ogwu,2002).

Each of these problems is interrelated in complex ways and requires a unified approach. The purpose of development should be to develop man and not to end with developing things. Fulfillment of basic needs of mankind should be the true objective of development and achievements that either do not contribute to this goal or even disrupt this basic requirement must not be pursued as a development goal.

ECOWAS Roles in Sustaining Peace and Development in West Africa

In promoting sustained economic development of the West African region through the implementation of the Community work programme, ECOWAS has laboured to bring about greater entrenchment of democratic culture, enhanced efficiency in dealing with conflicts, crisis prevention and resolution as witnessed in the restoration of stability to Member States caught in conflict over the years.

Today, the interests of more than 300 million citizens of ECOWAS are being served through the accelerated implementation of sectoral programmes for wealth creation.

While looking forward to the future, positive strides have been made in the harmonization of macroeconomic policies, the implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET), multilateral surveillance, research and youth empowerment, trade liberalisation, Customs union, favourable industrial policy, mines development, agriculture and environment, infrastructure-transport, telecommunications and energy. When completed, the Abidjan-Lagos Highway Project under the regional infrastructure development programme will support the ECOWAS Regional Integration

Agenda, stimulate investments, reduce poverty, improve security and enhance accessibility within Region.

There is also the march towards the creation of a single currency by 2020, and the adoption of a single biometric identity card. There now exists a boosted capacity for organising an efficient regional response against challenges such as Diseases, natural disasters and terrorism.

Apart from the institutional reforms which are now putting ECOWAS on a much stronger footing, the West African region has benefitted immensely from the fruits of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which compels political best practices in respect of presidential terms of office as well as the zero tolerance for unconstitutional seizure of power.

Through its electoral assistance mechanism, ECOWAS has continued to help in ensuring free, fair and credible elections in the member states.

The major achievements of ECOWAS through the years cut across all sectors and include:

- i. The adoption of the Macroeconomic Convergence Report by the ECOWAS Convergence Council
- ii. Establishment of the ECOWAS Monetary Institute (EMI)
- iii. Adoption of methodological guides for the harmonization of Public Finance Statistics, Government Financial Operations Tables (TOFE), External Trade Statistics, Balance of Payment (BOP) and International Investment Position (IIP).
- iv. Conclusion of the review of the Sahel Strategy document and its action plan to boost regional security.
- v. Formulation of an ECOWAS Common Trade Policy (CTP) and ECOWAS Trade Development Strategy.
- vi. Completion of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the signing by 13 Member States.
- vii. Custom Union in the offing with the implementation of the CET by Eight Member-States.

- viii. Free Movement of goods and persons boosted with the adoption of the ECOWAS Biometric Identity Card to facilitate mobility and promote security in the region.
- ix. Drafting of a Regional Border Management Manual for use in immigration/security training institutions.
- x. Launching of the Ecolink project, which aims to transform and improve key operations within the ECOWAS Community.
- xi. The Systems, Applications & Products (SAP) component of Ecolink aims at improving the financial management systems and ensuring real-time information for effective decision-making in the Community Institutions.
- xii. Promotion of strategic products for food security and sovereignty including combating cross-border livestock disease.
- xiii. Renewed efforts to enhance the environmental governance, general environmental protection, capacity building as well as Sustainable resource management for development in the Member States.
- xiv. Re-award of the contract for the construction of the Sèmè-Kraké Joint Border Post (Benin-Nigeria)
- xv. Evaluation of tenders completed for the works, contract for final engineering designs for the rehabilitation of sections of the Enugu-Bemenda road between Nigeria and Cameroon and the construction of a Joint Border Post (JBP) and a Border Bridge at Mfum border.
- xvi. Feasibility study for the extension of the West African Gas Pipeline Network concluded.
- xvii. Development of Regional Power Market with the setting up of regulatory and economic environment.
- xviii. Promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and services.
- xix. An ECOWAS Directive on Energy Efficiency Buildings (EEB) aimed at promoting energy efficiency in buildings in ECOWAS Member States has been developed by ECREEE.
- xx. Establishment of a Regional Centre for Disease Control.

- xxi. Maintain and strengthen the actions undertaken to consolidate peace and security in the region.
- xxii. Consolidating the implementation of the, Common Market, Trade Liberalization Scheme (TLS) and the Protocol on Free Movement of persons, goods and services.
- xxiii. Signing of the Supplementary Act on Dakar-Abidjan Corridor, and laying of the first stone for the regional electricity project. The project covers Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- xxiv. The regional peace and security architecture provides for conflict prevention, management and resolution, as well as early warning System. The latter allows ECOWAS to analyse human security issues and anticipate political crises, food shortages, health problems and disasters.
- xxv. ECOWAS is now poised in the coming years to intensify efforts aimed at sustaining peace and political stability already achieved, in order to create the best conditions for the development of the region.

ECOWAS is meant to foster interstate economic and political cooperation. History is on its side in this regard. Dating back to pre-colonial times, West Africans have been among the world's most mobile populations although much of the migration had been intra-regional. About 7.5 million West African migrants (3 percent of the regional population) are living in ECOWAS countries other than their own. The 1.2 million other migrants are dispersed mainly in North America and Europe. Estimated at about 149 million in 2013, women constitute over 50 percent of the region's population. The cross-border migration of women as traders and business persons places them as potential champions for promoting integration. This reality needs to be fully exploited.

The diverse socio-cultural dimension of development should be a necessary building block for establishing peace and security in the region. Drawing strength from its past, leaders of the community has been making sacrifices to keep the shape of the political structure of the region.

Challenges Facing ECOWAS in achieving its mandate

Despite the above mentioned achievements by the ECOWAS, there are some challenges that need to be highlighted. For example, the rising scourge of terrorism which now threatens the peace and security of our sub-region. In the Sahel Region, we have witnessed the increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons. As a result, countries in the region are today threatened by insurgents and terrorists. Their actions have dire consequences for the continuing peace, stability and prosperity of the region.

In the Gulf of Guinea, the increasing incidence of piracy has reached a worrisome dimension. This is compounded by drug trafficking, oil bunkering and human trafficking. All of these require urgent and concerted actions from all of us. Nigeria calls for stronger and more effective regional, continental and global alliance to rid our region of terrorism, piracy and violent extremism.

Strong External Influence has been one of the challenges facing ECOWAS since its establishment. Many of the member states were former colonies of some former colonial powers. Countries such as Britain, France and Portugal ever had a colony or two that now belong to the ECOWAS group. These member states are still controlled, to a certain extent, by their former colonial masters. The influences of these colonial masters, in some cases, are so strong that, they are able to determine the direction of their votes at summit meetings on issues that are not in the interest of the former masters.

Non diversifications of economy are also one of the numerous problems facing ECOWAS as a sub regional organization. Many West Africa Countries continue to show a slight increase in the performance of export revenues usually from a few primary commodities or from a single product mineral commodity. Import of intermediate and capital goods to aid production of goods and services as well as to provide services all times. This sign is shown in most developing

nation of the world. (Imohe 2007) ECOWAS has today successfully evolve a single international passports for its members to enhance free movement. However the date for the commencement on the use of single currency is not yet known.

Conclusion and recommendations

A sustainable development agenda cannot be achieved if associated steps are not taken to address the direct and intermediate regional security challenges, including securing external borders against terrorist incursions, combating drug trafficking and related cross-border crime, and enhancing regional preparedness against natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Emphasis must be put on building up local capacities in the security sector. The security forces and services in the region are grossly underfunded. The failure of the military, border, and custom officials to control trafficking and other crimes is not due so much to a lack of ability as to a lack of suitable equipment and motivation

The ability to project legitimate power, preserve territorial integrity, and assure the welfare of the people is the cornerstone of any sovereign state, and the UN rightly places primary responsibility for peace and security with member states. In the developing world of incomplete state formation, weak institutions, and competing demands between regime and human security, the state has often failed in this cardinal responsibility. Collective responsibility by diverse actors has often been called upon either to complement national efforts or to defend and promote human and regional security. In this regard civil society and humanitarian agencies, as well as regional and international organizations, play critical roles. In addition, predicting the future of human and regional security in West Africa is fraught with risks. Impressed by the relative progress that the region has made in the areas of economic growth, democracy, and human rights, local and international observers are urging countries to stay the course. More cautious critics applaud the advances but urge greater efforts to consolidate the gains. The pessimists are not convinced about the security situation and predict a new cycle of doom and gloom. The realistic outlook lies somewhere between these prognoses.

ECOWAS should also, lead in the design and facilitation of programs for regional transport, energy, and telecommunication networks. Further, the institution should develop minimum regional standards and regulatory frameworks to meet the challenges of natural resource governance, including the management of liquid and solid minerals, the scramble for land and water, and the accompanying ethnic and religious tensions. It should also lead the efforts to build up the region's political, intelligence, and military capabilities to confront the menace posed by the evolving scramble for energy resources and markets in the Gulf of Guinea, transnational and cross-border crime, as well as terrorism and increasing local militancy. Above all, urgent action needs to be taken to strengthen regional capacities to anticipate, prevent, and combat environmental disasters and killer diseases, and mitigate their effects. A common factor underlying these challenges is the worsening youth crisis and gender inequality, which call for a comprehensive regional and national agenda that prioritizes the expansion of social infrastructure, including schools, health, and other social amenities to underpin youth empowerment, employment opportunities, and affirmative action. Discourse within the region and with development partners about migration should not be focused mainly on halting so-called illegal migration, but conceptualized within the framework of the development agenda. Thus, Europe and America should be willing to compensate the region for the loss of medical professionals and engineers, who are often enticed by attractive packages to migrate, after huge sums have been spent in West Africa to train them at a time when pandemics like malaria, river blindness, and HIV/AIDS are ravaging the region.

The region's economic salvation, however, lies in the ability of ECOWAS to follow through on its mission by ensuring the emergence of a common market and integrated citizenry. This will need to entail a massive commitment to infrastructure development with the collaboration of the private

Successfully containing the security challenges emanating from the Sahel-Sahara belt and the Gulf of Guinea is beyond the capacities of individual member states and ECOWAS. Besides the efforts of member states sharing the Sahel-Sahara belt, the cooperation of ECOWAS, the Maghreb Union, and the Intergovernmental Agency for Development (IGAD) will be needed in any meaningful initiatives designed to eliminate the many threats that have been identified (AbdelFatau, 2009). The AU would play a most useful role under such circumstances just as the

involvement of the United States, France, and the UN would be required for reasons of capacity building, legitimacy, and sustainability.

Internally, within the Community Institutions, there is an urgent need for structural reforms in order to enhance capacity and improve transparency. Activities of our Organisation must conform to global best practices to strengthen confidence and assure growth. More importantly, we must diversify our revenue base and reduce our imports in the face of rapid changes in the global arena. It cannot continue to be business as usual, if our Organisation is to fulfil the vision of our founding fathers.

References

Abdel-Fatau, M (2009) "West Africa: Governance and Security in Changing Region; Africa working paper series International Peace Institute.

Aning, K. (2017) "Africa: Confronting Complex Threats," Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series, International Peace Academy, New York,

Casey, E. (2006) "Investigating sophisticated security breaches. Communications of the ACM, 49(2), 48-54

Eselebor, W. A (2013) "Security and Development in the context of Borderless Border in West Africa; Managing Security in a globalised world; JOHN ARCHERS Publisher Ltd.

Imohe, E. (2007) "Economic development crises in Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS): challenges and controversy. New York 200

Maier Karl (2000) This House has fallen: Nigeria in Crisis Penguin group, London

Mohamed, I. C (2007) "The Role of ECOWAS in Achieving the Economic Integration of West Africa; A speech delivered by President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission.

Ogwu, J.(2002)” The African Union and Challenges of Development in the 21st century, Public Lecture series No 1, Dept of political science, university of . Ilorin, PEFS.

Robert, J. F. & Gion, G (2004)” Introduction to Security, Seventh Edition; Elsevier imprint, USA.

Seer, D. (1969)” The meaning of development. International Development Review11(4):3-4
UNDP(2009) Human Development Report.

Sen, A. (1973)” On Economic Inequality;Oxford:Clarendon Press.

Waever, O . (1995)” Securitization and Desecuritization. In: Lipschutz, R.D (ed.). On Security. New York: Columbia University Press. 46-86.