

**ECOWAS Day Celebration
Address By**

**Director General, GIABA
On the Occasion of the Celebration of ECOWAS Day
28 May, 2007, Savana Hotel, Dakar**

Protocols...

It is my pleasure welcoming you this evening and to deliver these few remarks for this important event. I am particularly enthused by the opportunity that the celebration of ECOWAS Day provides for GIABA and its sister organization, the Gender Development Centre based here in Dakar, to entertain our distinguished guests, and also sensitise to major achievements in sustained efforts to better integrate the West African Region.

2. Permit me to pay tribute to the Founding Fathers of ECOWAS who, exactly 32 years ago, took the landmark decision to create an organization aimed at integrating the entire West African region and improving the standard of living of its diverse and culturally rich people.

3. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of 15 countries, founded in 1975. The region comprises 15 Member States with three official Community languages (French, English and Portuguese). With a population in excess of 251 million inhabitants, ECOWAS Member Countries have a total area of more than 5,112,000 square kilometres.

4. ECOWAS Mission is to promote integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters.....

The Institutions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are as follows:

- The Commission
- The Community Parliament
- The Community Court of Justice
- The ECOWAS Bank for Investment & Development (EBID).

5. The ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, more often called The Fund are its two main institutions designed to implement policies, pursue a number of programmes and carry out development projects in Member States. Such projects include intra-community road construction and telecommunications; and agricultural, energy and water resources development.

6. Weak economies, including those in Africa, may have higher risk of being severely affected by money laundering and terrorist financing, for a number of reasons: firstly, the vulnerabilities of the large informal sector to be abused and misused for the purpose of laundering the proceeds of crime; secondly, the weak criminal justice system makes it difficult to bring perpetrators to justice and re-establish the rule of law – which is very critical to establishing democracy and good governance; thirdly, the enormity of cross-cutting issues, such as poverty, hunger and disease are additional burden competing for attention and limited resources to ameliorate.

Additionally, the financial system with its mechanisms of shrouding transactions in secrecy is identified as most common conduit for proceeds of crime, this is even more so in countries where financial regulations are rarely enforced. It is in response to these threats that GIABA was established. GIABA is one of the Specialized Agencies of ECOWAS. It was set up in 2000 by the ECOWAS Heads of Government and Authorities of Heads of States in response to the global outcry against money laundering, terrorism and terrorist financing.

7. The key mandates of GIABA, include to:

- i. Protect the national economies and the financial and banking systems of Signatory States against the proceeds of crime, and combat the financing of terrorism;
- ii. Improve measures and intensify efforts to combat the laundering of proceeds of crime and the financing of terrorism ;
- iii. Strengthen co-operation amongst its Members;
- iv. Ensure harmonized and concerted adoption of appropriate measures to combat Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism;
- v. Evaluate, through Self-Evaluation and Mutual Evaluation according to the FATF procedure, progress and the efficacy of measures; and
- vi. Encourage Member States to join GIABA.

8. Gender Development Centre, also based here in Dakar is to establish, develop, facilitate, coordinate and follow up the strategies and programmes aimed at ensuring that matters related to the disparities between men and women in the integration programmes of the Community, as well as women promotion are incorporated within the framework of objectives of the ECOWAS Treaty.

Its mission is to:

- Implement the ECOWAS policy and system of gender management;
- Strive for the increase in the performance of women in their fields of activities (seminars, round tables, study trips in order to stimulate the spirit of entrepreneurship and enjoy better exchange of experience);
- Ensure apprenticeship and development of skills needed to execute the Millennium Goals on sex equality in the sub-region and in programmes;
- Build networks and partnership with relevant Agencies and Institutions for financial, technical and statutory support to the activities of the Centre.

9. Finally, allow me to reiterate my sincere gratitude to the Government of Senegal for accepting to host GIABA and the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre. I also wish to thank development partners who have been very supportive of our efforts at GIABA to raise awareness and sensitise the region about threats posed by Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism. I hope that GIABA will continue to receive similar support from the Media and Civil Society Organizations in our tireless efforts to protect our economies against the proceeds of crime.

Thank you for your attention and enjoy your evening!

GIABA Secretariat

Monday 28 May, 2007