Final Communique

« Making the best use of agricultural potential through regional partnership”
FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. Following the success achieved by the 1st Business Forum held from 29 to 31 October 2007 in Accra, Ghana and the institutionalization of the ECOWAS Business Forum as an annual event, the second edition of the Forum was held from 12 to 14 February 2009 in Ouagadougou. The Forum was organized by the ECOWAS Commission in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA-SRO/WA) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso (CCI/BF) and in collaboration with the European Union.

2. The objective of the second Forum was to continue the efforts being made by the ECOWAS Commission to mobilise the private sector and make it contribute to regional competitiveness, food security and overall development through trade partnerships and integration.

3. The second Forum brought together more than three hundred participants made up of business managers, representatives of Consular Chambers, employers’ organizations, the civil society, private sector support groups, professional organizations in various lines of the agricultural sector, ECOWAS member States, International Organizations and development partners involved in private sector promotion in West Africa.

4. The opening ceremony of the Forum was marked by the welcome address of the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso, the speech by the President of the ECOWAS Commission on the status of the integration process in the ECOWAS region, and the opening speech by the Honourable Minister of Trade and Promotion of Enterprises and Handicrafts of Burkina Faso.

Following the opening ceremony, the deliberations took place in plenary sessions on the central theme “Making the best Use of agricultural Potential through regional Partnership” with the following sub-themes:

i. **ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP)** some aspects of which are geared towards the development of the regional market and the promotion of a favourable trading environment. ECOWAP is aimed at mobilizing animal, natural, land, water,
and financial resources for the development of the chain of values of agricultural products.

ii. **The African Strategy for the Creation and Retention of Wealth** which redefines a new partnership for development aimed at facilitating the emergence of a new breed of African entrepreneurs and investors whose ambition is to invest in value added activities from the beginning to the end of the global chain of products originating from the tapping of the investment opportunities offered by Africa.

iii. **The Business Climate in West Africa** based on the legal texts relating to competition, investment, trade and Community enterprises.

iv. **The Role of the various Stakeholders within the Framework of the Promotion of Agribusiness, and Food Security** with the participation of the ECOWAS Commission, partners, and the private sector and examination of experiences and the prospects for Burkina Faso and other landlocked ECOWAS countries.

v. **Development of regional Markets** through the promotion of agricultural sector information and regulation mechanisms with special emphasis on the creation of a Regional Agricultural Produce Exchange and the promotion of intra-Community trade and investments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND ECOWAS BUSINESS FORUM**

In order to implement the vision of the ECOWAS of Peoples, make the free movement of goods and people a reality as well as make the best use of the agricultural potential of the ECOWAS region, the participants of the Second ECOWAS Business Forum made the following recommendations:

**Development of basic infrastructure**

i. Provision of adequate infrastructure (road, river, sea, rail, air, energy) at national and sub-regional level for the development of agribusinesses as a tool for the diversification of our economies for the creation and retention of wealth.
Research-development and training in the agricultural sector

ii. Strengthening of public-private partnership with a view to developing research activities-actions the purpose of which is to respond to the real needs of stakeholders in various lines of agricultural activity (plant production, livestock rearing, fishery and aquaculture, natural resources) and popularise the current gains made in terms of research findings;

iii. Emphasis should be placed on the production of improved seeds as a key tool of any line of agricultural production;

iv. Training of farmers in new technologies is necessary in order to improve productivity in the agricultural sector and should therefore receive support from the States, the private sector and regional institutions;

v. Strengthening of the south-south partnership in order to capitalise on the good practices of certain emerging countries and those of the SONGHAI Centre (Porto Novo, Benin), in order to make it a regional centre of excellence for agricultural apprenticeship and training in agricultural entrepreneurship.

Private sector involvement in investment in the agribusiness sector

vi. Conducting and disseminating financial and economic rate of return studies in the various lines of activity;

vii. Ensuring a better protection of the agribusiness sector through appropriate mechanisms (common external tariff, fifth band, EPA negotiations, etc…);

viii. Implementing the African Strategy for the Creation and Retention of Wealth through the creation of joint ventures in the various lines of agricultural activity in order to encourage the emergence of African investors.
Development of financing mechanisms adapted to the agricultural sector

ix. Establishment of **special agricultural funds** in the countries in order to finance and/or subsidise the lines of agricultural production;

x. Creation of **guarantee systems** in order to reduce to a minimum the risks associated with agricultural financing.

Development of the intra-Community market

xi. The creation of an appropriate environment for the exchange of information from the beginning to the end of the **chains of value** through the improvement of the ECOWAS Information Gateway, ECOBIZ and the development of e-agriculture;

xii. Organization of a **regional buffer stock** management system to ensure price stability and food security in the sub-region;

xiii. Creation of a regional agricultural **produce exchange** as an instrument for fixing the prices of agricultural **produce** and enhancing the negotiation power of all stakeholders in the **chains of value**;

xiv. The establishment of mechanisms for the **convertibility of the currencies** in the ECOWAS region as essential measures for trade;

xv. Disseminating of the laws and regulations on the free movement of goods and persons and monitoring their implementation;

xvi. Dissemination of the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP);

xvii. Creation of an office to receive directly complaints in respect of harassment against the free movement of goods and persons at the borders of ECOWAS member States.
African Strategy for the Creation and Retention of Wealth

xviii. Implementing and disseminating the African strategy;

xix. Support by ECOWAS and ECA to the multi-disciplinary Working Group for the preparation of the roadmap of the SEGOU Initiative creating the first joint venture in the rice sector;

xx. Organising of forums on strategic produce before the holding of each ECOWAS Business Forum based on the example of the Rice Forum held at SEGOU.

Perpetuation of the Forum

xxi. In view of the success of the First Business Forum held in Accra in 2007 and that of the Second Forum which has just ended in Ouagadougou, the participants renewed their support for the perpetuation of the Forum;

Organisation of the Third Forum

xxii. Participants of the Second ECOWAS Business Forum mandated the ECOWAS Commission to choose the venue, date and theme of the Third ECOWAS Business Forum.

2009-2010 Plan of Action

xxiii. Based on the recommendations made above and the ongoing activities under the 2008-2009 Plan of Action, the participants mandated the ECOWAS Commission to draw up the 2009-2010 Plan of Action in close collaboration with the Forum Planning Committee. The implementation of the Plan will be coordinated by the Private Sector Department of the ECOWAS Commission.

Burkina Faso

Done at Ouagadougou, this 14th day of February 2009