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AFRICA DO OESTE



ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST  
AFRICAN STATES

COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES ETATS  
DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST

**Speech of the Director Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS  
Commission Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe – delivered at the 75<sup>th</sup> UNHCR Executive  
Committee Meeting (EXCOM)**

**14 - 18 October 2024**

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# **SPEECH**

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*ECOWAS COMMISSION  
October 2024*

**Your Excellency, the Chairperson of the 75th ExCom**  
**Your Excellency, the High Commissioner for Refugees,**  
**Excellences,**  
**Distinguished Participants,**

On behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Dr Omar Alieu Touray**, it is my pleasure to address the 75<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom). I convey the warm greetings of the President of the Commission to the High Commissioner, **H.E Filippo Grandi**.

**Your Excellency, the ECOWAS Commission aligns itself with the statement of the African Group.**

The ECOWAS delegation has followed the deliberations very carefully and noted the High Commissioner's commendation to all the ECOWAS Member States in their efforts to address the plights of Persons of Concerns, namely IDPs, Refugees and Stateless persons. In addition, the High Commissioner's response has emphasised the political situation and cross-border nature of the challenges that continue to fuel the worsening humanitarian situations in West Africa leaving millions of people in need of protection. By this singular statement, Your Excellency, you have reinforced the importance of a regional approach and the relevance and role of regional organisations like ECOWAS.

Permit me to re-echo the call of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Dr Omar Alieu Touray** to all Excellencies and stakeholders committed to the peace and prosperity of the region to accompany West Africa in the quest for regional unity. This is key to addressing not only the political challenges but the conflict, food insecurity, climate change and the youth bulge that continue to pose risks and contribute to the increasing number of vulnerable population in the region.

On the subject of statelessness, ECOWAS Member States made the first concrete demonstration of their commitment by adopting the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness in the ECOWAS region in 2017. This has been an important framework of engagement with Member states to address the legal and policy gaps to statelessness in the region. In addition, a Regional Model Law on the Determination of Statelessness, the Protection of Stateless Persons and the facilitation of their naturalization, was endorsed by experts in 2023. Furthermore, a Regional Study on the Risks of Statelessness in West and Central Africa was launched in 2024 by the UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa. The findings of study will provide criteria in determining persons at risk of statelessness, the identification of these persons, as well as information on statelessness prevention activities. To sustain the momentum of these regional successes and the renewed commitment to end statelessness, the ECOWAS Commission has joined the Global Alliance for joint action to end statelessness.

In the last three days of the general debate, ECOWAS Member states have also recounted tangible achievements recorded in addressing statelessness in the region since the launch of the #IBelong Campaign in 2014 and examples of the successes include:

- The adoption of the Law relating to the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons in Benin and Senegal.
- The adoption of the new nationality Code by Benin, introducing the jus soli as a means of attribution of nationality, therefore contributing to ensuring that no child is born stateless (2022).
- The validation and adoption of Statelessness determination Procedures by Nigeria in November 2022 and the domestication of the 1954 Convention through its incorporation in the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons. (NCFRMI) Amendment Act in December 2022.
- The signature, in 2023 of the Decree implementing the 2022 law relating to the status of refugees and stateless persons in Senegal.

ECOWAS Commission's commitment in words is also matched by action as we have committed about 9 million USD in 2024 to support Member States towards addressing on-going responses to IDPs and refugees in the region. However, due to time constraints, I would only highlight two examples of the Commission's funding support, namely; support to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire that has seen an upsurge in refugees from the Central Sahel region and has demonstrated regional solidarity by hosting refugees; while Nigeria has received support to address forced displacement including those affected by the recent and devastating flood disasters in some states in Nigeria.

**Excellences,** On a final note, I wish to reiterate the President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Dr Omar Aliou Touray's** commitment to work with UNHCR – a strong and dependable partner of the ECOWAS region.

Thank you.