

ECOWAS

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair.....	2
Welcome to the Economic Communities of West African States.....	3
Introduction to the Committee.....	4
Topic A: The Development of Metropolitan Regions and Cities in the ECOWAS Region.....	6
Questions for Delegates to Consider: Topic A.....	9
Topic B: Development of a Unified Currency.....	10
Questions for Delegates to Consider: Topic B.....	14
Positions.....	15

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates, Welcome to WAMUNC XXVIII! I'm Varun Kandarpa and I'll be one of your chairs for this Economic Community of West African States. On behalf of me, and your other staffers, I would like to express how excited we are to welcome you to the conference! Like many other ECOWAS committees the goal of this conference is to tackle burgeoning Economic issues in the region. This time around I'm hoping to take a twist from general debates about improving the economies in the region to more tangible changes being debated by the committee. Urban infrastructure and Unified Currencies are the cornerstones of many modern nations and are critical in propelling countries into the future. Consider how factors such as political agendas, socioeconomic disparities, and the relentless pursuit of technological advancements shape the decisions and outcomes of nations involved. Look into the economic impacts of urban infrastructure and seek to truly understand currency trade and how a currency's strength improves/worsens based on economic factors. Look beyond the scope of providing economic support to help establish longer term solutions that are preventative or landscape changing. I am seeking plans of action not just funding concerns as often it's in the most farfetched ideas that the right answer lies. A little bit about me, I am a Junior in the School of Business studying International Business & Finance. I participated in my high school's Model UN club all four years and have chaired a plethora of conferences ! I'm a big travel person, love visiting new cities and trying new food. Trust I'm super basic but city building is my thing! I hope y'all have fun and I'm looking forward to committee!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to email

wamuncregional@gwu.edu with an advisor CC'd

Sincerely , Varun

Welcome to the Economic Communities of West African States

As ECOWAS continues its efforts toward long term stability and deeper regional integration, I encourage delegates to look closely at the political relationships, historical tensions, and developmental differences that influence decision making across the fifteen member states. In this committee, we will examine how national priorities, economic goals, and regional partnerships come together in both metropolitan development and monetary policy. These factors open doors for collaboration, but they also bring complex challenges that will require thoughtful negotiation and creative problem solving.

I hope that delegates approach both topics with a sense of realism, creativity, and a genuine commitment to equitable progress. By looking at shared economic interests, considering the real experiences of West African communities, and recognizing the importance of sustainable regional planning, you can develop solutions that make ECOWAS stronger. Through focused debate and collaboration, I look forward to seeing proposals that promote inclusive growth, financial stability, and long term development for the entire region.

Introduction to the Committee

As we look ahead to 2025, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) finds itself at a pivotal moment. Rapid urban growth, increasing economic ties, and ongoing debates about a regional currency are reshaping the region. West Africa is now home to

some of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with the urban population expected to exceed 400 million by 2035, according to the United Nations¹. Cities like Lagos, Abidjan, Dakar, and Accra are expanding quickly, creating new opportunities but also putting significant pressure on infrastructure, housing, and public services. These challenges make it clear that coordinated regional strategies are urgently needed to ensure that metropolitan development is both sustainable and equitable across ECOWAS.

At the same time, ECOWAS is advancing discussions on the creation of a unified regional currency, the ECO. While the concept was formally endorsed via the Accra Declaration in 2000, progress has been hindered by inflation, fiscal imbalances, meaning differences in government spending, and differing levels of monetary stability among member states.² In 2019, ECOWAS announced a renewed timeline for monetary union and outlined criteria for convergence, the unification of currencies². However, by 2023, only two member states had met all required benchmarks³. The ongoing debate reflects the political sensitivity of relinquishing national monetary autonomy, particularly for countries with volatile financial systems.

Regional economic integration in West Africa is also being shaped by shifting geopolitical and security challenges. Since 2020, several ECOWAS countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea have faced coups or unconstitutional changes in government, making it harder to coordinate regional policies and plan for long-term development. Economic disruptions from sanctions, border closures, and security crises have hit urban centers

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Urbanization Prospects 2022. <https://population.un.org/wup/> Excel 2035 Projections

² Africa's urban boom: shaping a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive future www.uneca.org/stories/%5Bblog%5D-africa%27s-urban-boom-shaping-a-prosperous%2C-sustainable%2C-and-inclusive-future

³ West African Monetary Institute (WAMI). Macroeconomic Convergence Report, 2023. <https://wami-imao.org/en/publications/macroeconomic-convergence-reports/>

especially hard, since these cities depend on cross-border trade and regional supply chains. These issues show just how closely linked metropolitan development and monetary stability are, and why strong institutional coordination is essential.

Institutions such as the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, the West African Monetary Institute, and the ECOWAS Parliament are working to advance regional projects. Their goals include improving connectivity within the region and promoting economic coordination⁴. Despite these efforts, challenges like limited funding, infrastructure gaps, and uneven progress among countries continue to slow things down. Looking ahead, the success of both metropolitan development and monetary integration will depend on how well member states can work together, uphold common standards, and attract sustainable investment.

Overall, the ECOWAS Committee offers the opportunity to examine two of the region's most pressing long-term challenges: planning and funding rapidly growing metropolitan cities, and creating a unified regional currency. You are encouraged to analyze political, economic, and social factors as you explore creative solutions to develop and strengthen cooperation across West Africa.

Topic A: The Development of Metropolitan Regions and Cities in the ECOWAS Region

Urban development across West Africa has been driven by rapid population growth and uneven economic progress, but also hampered by major infrastructure gaps. Cities like Lagos, Abidjan, Dakar, and Accra have become the region's economic centers, attracting millions in

⁴ Wikipedia on EBID: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ECOWAS_Bank_for_Investment_and_Development

search of opportunity. However, these urban centers continue to face issues, such as overcrowding, informal settlements, which often lack basic amenities and sanitation services, limited transportation options, and a lack of reliable public services. The United Nations reports that the urban population in West Africa jumped from 28% in 1980 to nearly 50% by 2020, making it one of the fastest urbanizing regions globally⁵. This surge has made it difficult for governments to plan and provide for their growing populations, leading to congested cities and inequalities in access to housing, sanitation, and jobs. As a result, it has become clear that there is an urgent need for more effective urban planning and investment in basic services.

In Nigeria, Lagos has experienced particularly dramatic expansion over the past few decades as migration from rural areas has intensified. The population of Lagos grew from approximately five million in 1991 to more than fifteen million by 2022, creating pressure on transportation systems, land availability, and public utilities⁶. Similarly, Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire expanded rapidly after the 1960s economic boom but subsequently struggled large informal settlements lacking basic services⁷.

Recent Examples

In Ghana, the Accra Metropolitan Area has struggled with recurrent flooding due to inadequate drainage systems and unplanned construction, which has made sustainable expansion difficult⁸. Urban traffic has also increased dramatically in Accra and Lagos, where average commute times frequently exceed two hours per day.

⁵ United Nations DESA. "World Urbanization Prospects 2022." <https://population.un.org/wup/>

⁶ Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics. "Lagos Population and Urbanization Trends." <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng>

⁷ Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025

https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/03/africa-s-urbanisation-dynamics-2025_005a8aa0/2a47845c-en.pdf

⁸ Government of Ghana. "Annual Flood Report and Urban Planning Assessment."

<https://www.ghanapublications.gov.gh>

Abidjan experienced significant modernization efforts after 2011, including construction of the Henri Konan Bédié Bridge and expansions of the port and public transit systems, yet rapid population growth continues to strain municipal services and affordable housing availability⁹. Importantly, several West African cities serve as anchor points for regional trade and foreign investment, which places them at the center of long term development strategies for ECOWAS.

Structural Challenges

Governance Constraints

Urban governance across ECOWAS countries faces significant challenges, with local governments often working with limited budgets and overlapping responsibilities, hindering efforts to plan for the long term.

Housing Shortages and Informal Settlements

The African Development Bank estimates that nearly fifty six percent of West Africa's urban residents live in informal settlements with inadequate sanitation or housing¹⁰. These conditions expose residents to public health risks, economic insecurity, and vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and coastal erosion.

Infrastructure Gaps

Transportation, energy, and water infrastructure remain significantly underdeveloped. The World Bank reports that West Africa loses up to two percent of regional GDP annually due to poor logistics performance, inadequate road networks, and unreliable electricity availability¹¹.

⁹ Ministry of Construction, Côte d'Ivoire. "Urban Development Strategy for Abidjan." <https://www.gouv.ci>

¹⁰ African Development Bank. "West Africa Informal Settlement Data Report." <https://www.afdb.org>

¹¹ World Bank. "Logistics Performance and Infrastructure Gaps in West Africa." <https://www.worldbank.org>

These gaps limit productivity and restrict the ability of metropolitan areas to function efficiently as economic hubs.

Legal and Land Ownership Complexities

Disputes over land ownership, outdated property laws, and inconsistent regulatory enforcement continue to slow large-scale urban development. These challenges make it difficult for investors to secure clear land titles, often resulting in significant delays or even the cancellation of major infrastructure projects, for example the Baharani Wind Power Project in Kenya. The lack of clarity around land ownership not only slows progress but also discourages much-needed investment in urban growth.

Current Situation

In 2025, ECOWAS member states are taking significant steps to modernize their metropolitan areas by prioritizing regional connectivity, economic integration, and sustainable development. Projects like the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor Highway are designed to connect five countries, making it easier for people and goods to move across borders and strengthening trade throughout West Africa¹². Urban expansion continues to accelerate, with projections suggesting that West Africa will gain more than one hundred million new urban residents by 2035.¹ Rapid urban growth in West Africa brings opportunities for economic transformation, job creation, and industrial development. However, this growth also creates significant challenges. As populations rise, cities like Lagos and Dakar face increased pressure on transportation, energy, and water systems. Climate change adds to these issues, leading to more frequent flooding, heat waves, and coastal erosion. Major cities that act as political or economic hubs

¹² ECOWAS Commission. “Abidjan–Lagos Corridor Highway Project Updates.” <https://www.ecowas.int>

often see growing inequality and tighter housing markets. Political instability in some ECOWAS countries further complicates long-term planning and makes it harder to secure funding for large urban projects.

Possible Recommendations

As delegates of ECOWAS, there are many solutions to consider when it comes to solving these problems. Your solutions should be comprehensive, realistic, and sustainable long-term, and, most importantly, creative. Here are some things you may consider:

- 1) Improving cities' urban governance capacity through better financing options, reforms in public administration, and technical training.
- 2) Investing in regional infrastructure by expanding transportation networks, strengthening energy systems, and improving digital connectivity.
- 3) Supporting affordable housing development by partnering with private developers and international organizations to increase access to safe, regulated, and affordable homes for growing urban populations.

Questions for Delegates to Consider: Topic A

- How can ECOWAS improve metropolitan governance systems to support sustainable long term development?
- What role should regional infrastructure projects play in linking major cities and stimulating economic growth?
- How can member states reduce the growth of informal settlements while expanding access to affordable housing?
- What strategies can cities employ to become more resilient to climate change, flooding,

and coastal erosion?

- How can ECOWAS balance private investment with public interest when financing major development projects?

Topic B: Development of a Unified Currency

Historical Overview

Since its establishment in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has prioritized the creation of a unified regional currency. This objective aims to facilitate trade, enhance regional integration, and promote economic stability among all fifteen member states. The initial significant milestone occurred in 1983 with the launch of the Monetary Cooperation Programme, which established explicit targets for inflation, budget deficits, exchange rates, and public debt¹³. However, numerous member states have struggled to meet these criteria due to economic volatility, political obstacles, and disparities in financial systems.

In 2000, ECOWAS established the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) to lead efforts for a common currency, the ECO¹⁴. The plan was to first have the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), comprising countries that did not use the CFA franc, adopt the new currency. After that, these countries would join with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), whose eight members already use the CFA franc. Although there were moments of progress, the ECO's launch kept getting postponed throughout the 2000s and 2010s because member states struggled to meet the agreed economic targets.

¹³ "Eco (Currency)." *Wikipedia*, 14 Feb. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eco_(currency).

¹⁴ Milkiewicz, Heather, and Paul R. Masson. "Africa's Economic Morass—Will a Common Currency Help?" *Brookings*, 1 July 2003, www.brookings.edu/articles/africas-economic-morass-will-a-common-currency-help/.

Momentum surged again in 2019 when ECOWAS Heads of State endorsed a revised roadmap for the ECO, emphasizing political commitment to monetary integration. However, major disagreements emerged soon afterward when several WAEMU states announced plans to reform the CFA franc and rename it the ECO while retaining its peg to the euro¹⁵. This unilateral move created tension among ECOWAS members and highlighted the complexity of merging diverse monetary regimes under one currency framework.

Recent Examples

Since 2020, a series of economic shocks has complicated the launch of the ECO. The COVID-19 pandemic slowed economies across many ECOWAS countries and pushed inflation above target levels in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. At the same time, rising global commodity prices and weaker local currencies increased fiscal pressures on governments, forcing them to balance fiscal discipline with urgent public health and social support needs.

Political instability has significantly influenced the prospects for a monetary union¹⁶. From 2020 to 2023, coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger prompted ECOWAS to impose sanctions, thereby disrupting economic cooperation among member states. These developments have delayed monetary reforms and raised concerns regarding the capacity of countries to uphold strong governance and maintain alignment on long-term policy objectives.

Structural Challenges

¹⁵ Banton, Caroline. "Understanding a Currency Peg and Exchange Rate Policy." *Investopedia*, 2019, www.investopedia.com/terms/c/currency-peg.asp.

¹⁶ Milkiewicz, Heather, and Paul R. Masson. "Africa's Economic Morass—Will a Common Currency Help?" *Brookings*, 1 July 2003, www.brookings.edu/articles/africas-economic-morass-will-a-common-currency-help/.

Economic Differences

Across ECOWAS, member states face differences in inflation, exchange rate systems, fiscal deficits, and public debt. According to WAMI's 2023 Convergence Report, only two countries met all the necessary macroeconomic criteria, underscoring the challenges of achieving the stability required for a unified currency¹⁷.

Exchange Rate and Monetary Policy Differences

WAEMU countries operate with a fixed exchange rate (where the value of the currency is kept stable by being tied to another currency) tied to the euro, supported by the French Treasury. In contrast, WAMZ nations use independent central banks and manage their own floating exchange rates (where the value of the currency changes based on supply and demand in the market). Bringing these different systems together under one monetary framework is both a technical and political challenge that requires careful negotiation and collaboration.

Institutional and Governance Constraints

The success of a monetary union within ECOWAS depends on the establishment of regional institutions capable of enforcing ECOWAS's rules, coordinating monetary policy, and managing stabilization efforts. Currently, ECOWAS lacks the authority and institutional strength of similar organizations such as the European Union, which has complicated progress toward a unified currency.

Current Situation

Looking ahead to 2025, ECOWAS remains committed to launching the ECO but

¹⁷ WAMI Macroeconomic Convergence Report 2023
<https://amao-wama.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/ECOWAS-Macroeconomic-Convergence-Report-2023.pdf>

recognizes major technical, political, and economic hurdles remain. The ECOWAS Commission is working with WAMI, WAEMU, and member states to improve national monetary systems and encourage greater financial cooperation across the region.

In a 2023 communiqué, ECOWAS stated the ECO will only launch once all member states reach and maintain convergence for an extended period. The current focus is on building regional payment systems, improving cross-border banking regulations, and laying the groundwork for future monetary harmonization. Many see the ECO as a way to lower transaction costs, boost trade within Africa, and support the African Continental Free Trade Area. Ongoing debates over exchange rate policies, central bank leadership, reserve management, and transition steps continue to slow progress.

Recommendations

Advancing the development of a unified ECOWAS currency requires coordinated policy reforms and strengthened institutional frameworks. Key recommendations include:

Strengthening Macroeconomic Convergence: Keeping government spending under control, maintaining stable prices, and ensuring countries do not take on more debt than they can manage, helping prepare ECOWAS member states to successfully share a common currency.

Enhancing Regional Financial Systems: Expanding cross-border banking regulation, payment infrastructure, and financial transparency.

Developing a Clear Governance Structure: Establishing an independent West African Central Bank with well-defined authority and mechanisms for managing monetary policy and enforcing fiscal rules.

Promoting Economic Diversification: Reducing reliance on commodity exports and expanding manufacturing and service sectors to stabilize member economies.

Encouraging Inclusive Political Dialogue: Facilitating consensus among all member states on exchange rate regimes, institutional design, and transition steps to ensure shared ownership of the ECO.

Implementation of these strategies would enhance ECOWAS's long-term capacity to establish a unified currency that promotes regional stability, trade integration, and economic growth.

Questions for Delegates to Consider: Topic B

- What should ECOWAS institutions do to make sure member countries follow shared economic rules and keep their economies stable?
- How should ECOWAS handle the differences in currencies between countries?
- What governance structures are necessary for a successful West African Central Bank?
- What changes are needed to make a West African Central Bank work effectively?
- How can the ECO help countries trade and work together more easily?

Positions

Core ECOWAS Members

Benin – A strong supporter of regional integration, Benin favors policies that promote trade, infrastructure, and economic coordination within ECOWAS.

Burkina Faso – Facing security and economic challenges, Burkina Faso prioritizes regional

stability, financial support, and flexibility in meeting integration goals.

Cabo Verde – With a small, service-based economy, Cabo Verde supports integration that strengthens trade, tourism, and financial stability while respecting national differences.

Côte d’Ivoire – As one of ECOWAS’s largest economies, Côte d’Ivoire strongly supports deeper economic integration and plays a leadership role in regional monetary and trade initiatives.

The Gambia – The Gambia supports ECOWAS cooperation to strengthen economic growth, governance, and trade opportunities for smaller economies.

Ghana – Ghana supports regional economic integration but emphasizes maintaining national control over monetary policy and ensuring economic readiness before full integration.

Guinea – Rich in natural resources, Guinea seeks regional cooperation that promotes investment, infrastructure development, and economic diversification.

Guinea-Bissau – Guinea-Bissau looks to ECOWAS for economic stability, development assistance, and stronger regional institutions to support growth.

Liberia – Liberia prioritizes economic recovery, capacity building, and regional cooperation to strengthen financial systems and trade networks.

Mali – Mali emphasizes security cooperation and economic support from ECOWAS, while advocating for flexible integration timelines due to internal challenges.

Niger – Niger supports ECOWAS efforts to address development gaps, security threats, and infrastructure needs across the region.

Nigeria – As ECOWAS’s largest economy, Nigeria plays a key leadership role but is cautious about monetary integration that could limit national economic control.

Senegal – Senegal strongly supports regional integration and institutional development, advocating effective governance structures and economic convergence.

Sierra Leone – Sierra Leone favors ECOWAS cooperation to promote post-crisis recovery, financial stability, and trade.

Togo – Togo supports economic integration initiatives that improve trade efficiency, port access, and connectivity.

Bordering States

Cameroon – Cameroon views ECOWAS cooperation as an opportunity to expand trade and connectivity while maintaining strong ties to Central Africa.

Central African Republic – The CAR looks to regional organizations for stability support, assistance, and long-term development opportunities.

AU Economic and Security Partners

Chad – Chad seeks regional partnerships to address security challenges and improve development through trade and infrastructure.

Democratic Republic of the Congo – The DRC supports broader regional integration to improve trade, security coordination, and infrastructure.

Equatorial Guinea – Equatorial Guinea seeks diversification and regional cooperation to reduce reliance on oil revenues

Gabon – Gabon supports regional economic initiatives that enhance financial stability and investment while protecting interests.

Mauritania – Mauritania is interested in closer economic ties with West Africa while balancing its North and West African partnerships.

Republic of the Congo – The Republic of the Congo favors regional economic cooperation that promotes diversification and trade.

South Sudan – As a young state, South Sudan seeks regional partnerships to strengthen institutions, infrastructure, and resilience

Sudan – Sudan is interested in regional economic cooperation that supports recovery, trade access, and stabilization.

Strategic/Political Expansion

Algeria – Algeria supports regional stability and cooperation while prioritizing sovereignty and controlled integration.

Burundi – Burundi seeks regional support to improve stability, development capacity, and trade.

Ethiopia – Ethiopia views regional economic integration as a tool for trade expansion, infrastructure, and increased continental influence.

Kenya – Kenya supports regional integration models that encourage trade and innovation while preserving economic competitiveness.

Morocco – Morocco actively pursues stronger ties with West Africa, emphasizing trade,

investment, and financial cooperation.

Rwanda – Rwanda strongly supports efficient regional institutions, economic reform, and streamlined trade systems.

Tanzania – Tanzania supports gradual integration and prioritizes national independence alongside regional cooperation.

Uganda – Uganda favors cooperation that strengthens regional markets, infrastructure, and resilience.

