

# **ECOWAS PARLIAMENT**

## **144<sup>TH</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY**

**Nusa Dua, Indonesia**

**20-24 March 2022**

### **Getting to Zero: Mobilizing Parliaments to Act on Climate Change**

#### **PROTOCOL**

Let me begin by expressing my profound gratitude for the invitation to speak at this august Assembly. I am especially honored to speak on Climate Change; a topic that one way or the other, has affected everyone on of us. Today, the world is experiencing rapidly rising temperatures in the summer, harshness of the winters and the droughts shriveling up vegetation. I could go on listing these changes we have all experienced in the past few decades. Climate Change is an unavoidable change that is devastating our planet and a threat to the existence of life on earth. The call for action was resonant all over the world and to some degree, successes were recorded in slowing down the degradation of our planet. However, it is now time to mobilize communities, nations and regions.

2. Members of Parliament should place more emphasis on the environment, through the various interventions they carry-out in their countries and constituencies. They should not only focus on areas like agriculture, education, health, and other infrastructural development issues. Rather, there should be mainstreaming of climate change in all our national budgets. Each sector of the economy should incorporate this phenomenon in its budget implementation proposal. Furthermore, there should be national policies on climate change and Members of Parliament should be provided with adequate knowledge on adaptation and mitigation measures.

3. In the ECOWAS region, most countries are experiencing severe droughts, deforestation, desertification, flooding, coastal erosion, disease outbreaks, famine and food shortages because of Climate Change. To redress these challenges, the ECOWAS Commission, with the full participation of the ECOWAS Parliament, and other stakeholders, has drawn-up a strategic programme for

reducing vulnerability to Climate Change in West Africa. The ECOWAS Commission expects Members of Parliament to be proactive and support the programme in the following ways:

- Encourage governments to adopt alternative sources of charcoal and wood consumption;
- Dialogue with their colleague MPs from industrialised countries to encourage their countries to reduce emission of greenhouse gases;
- Encourage Member States to promote the development of alternative sources of energy like solar, wind, biomass, biogas, photovoltaic panels, and hydro electrical power;
- Support governments in sensitization campaigns on Climate Change and use of renewable energy;
- Encourage governments to get involved in the negotiations of transfer of technology on renewable energy from the developed countries;
- Promote the formulation of laws that take into account the adaptation and mitigation measures of climate change; and
- Active participation in negotiations on Climate Change.

4. It is worth mentioning that, because treaty negotiations are an executive action, Members of Parliament are generally not involved. Upon conclusion of such negotiations, it is imperative that Members should be given adequate briefing on the objectives, background, content and expected outcomes of such agreements. This would foster their understanding and possible buy-in into the agreements. It would also ease ratification by the various Parliaments.

5. One of the Standing Committees at the ECOWAS Parliament is the Committee on Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources. To promote synergy, this Committee works closely with the Directorates of Agriculture, and Environment, of the ECOWAS Commission on all policy and programme implementation issues on the Environment and Climate Change. I wish to recall one of our major accomplishments in Climate Change was when that Committee organized a meeting in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, in July 2013. The theme of the meeting was **“Natural Resources and Regional Coordination and collaborative responses to appropriate Adaptation to Climate Change”**. The meeting came up with the following recommendations which were adopted by the Plenary of Parliament and transmitted to the ECOWAS Commission:

- Parliamentarians should commit to ensuring that substantial budget resources are allocated to the adaptation to climate change in all key sectors of development; promote and harmonise the legislation on coastal areas and land plus further ensure their effective implementation; encourage and support regional programmes for protection against coastal erosion; and reinforce the improvement of national climate observing systems.
- There is need for Parliamentarians to participate in Climate Change negotiations because it is only then, that they can bring pressure to bear on their fellow colleagues and policymakers to enact change;
- The Parliament should take the initiative to ensure that ECOWAS countries again, speak in unison when it comes to issues of Climate Change, most especially in its negotiations;
- Climate Change issues to be mainstreamed in the budget of all development sectors in the National Budgets of our various countries;
- The Joint Committee should carry out a Study Tour to some of the countries that are involved in the **GREEN WALL PROJECT**. This would further enable better monitoring of the level of progress in its implementation, and to see practical interventions that are being taken with regards to Mitigation measures towards the negative effects of Climate Change.

6. Let me conclude by reiterating that, in addition to their law-making functions, Parliaments should provide effective oversight to ensure that the legislations they pass are sufficiently funded and implemented, and that the citizens it represents are consulted and included in these decision-making processes. Furthermore, Parliaments have a key-role in setting a country's wider development vision and in developing sound environmental policies in support of this vision. This should include;

- Shaping a policy and regulatory framework that promotes mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;
- The development of renewable energy potential; and
- The provision of improved energy access and security, among others.

**THANK YOU**