



MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NIAMEY, 9 JANUARY 2006

MEMORANDUM

Cross-border Initiatives Programme

Assessment and perspective of the implementation of the Cross-border Initiatives Programme Following the adoption of the Memorandum on "the cross-border concept or local integration" by Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 18 January 2005.

Executive Secretariat
Abuja, January 2006

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Introduction

1) On 18 January 2005 in Accra (Ghana) the Executive Secretariat submitted a Memorandum entitled “the cross-border concept or local integration” to the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member States. This Memorandum proposed to willing Member States to promote joint development projects between populations living on either side of a border. It upholds that the increasing number of these cross-border initiatives in the areas of health, agriculture, livestock breeding, education and culture and many others, will at the same time help improve living conditions of border populations who are often the most destitute and accelerate the regional integration process. In this Memorandum, the Executive Secretary asked member States to support the implementation of the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (C.I.P.) which would introduce the “cross-border” concept to ECOWAS’ agenda. It proposes to set out the C.I.P.’s objectives as follows:

- The development of a Cross-Border Legal Convention at ECOWAS level.
- The identification of cross-border pilot projects on the basis of a participative process implicating ECOWAS, local actors and development partners.
- The extension of the cross-border concept in all of ECOWAS Member States.
- Over time, the creation of a West African Border Towns and Regions Association.

2) During the year 2005, the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and its principal partner in this regard, the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)/OECD, have implemented the first elements of the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme. This Memorandum aims to bring this to the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, to submit new proposals to them likely to strengthen the attained results and solicit their opinions and suggestions.

I. Implementation and results of the C.I.P. during the year 2005

3) Annex 1 presents the chronology of activities undertaken in 2005 by the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat and the SWAC with the support of numerous partners. The main results of this work are set out hereafter.

1.1. Development of a first draft Cross-Border Cooperation Convention in the ECOWAS zone

4) A first draft Convention was prepared by the Executive Secretariat’s Legal Service. This draft was based in part on the Madrid Convention which is the founding legal act of cross-border cooperation in Europe. Close contacts have been established with the Council of Europe, author of the Madrid Convention. The Council of Europe will provide support to the finalisation of the West African Convention.

1.2. Launching of two cross-border cooperation experiences in West Africa

5) These experiences were launched at two workshops which were held under the auspices of ECOWAS. One was held in Sikasso in September 2005 on the cross-border zone Sikasso-Korhogo – Bobo Dioulasso, the other in Ziguinchor in October 2005 on the Southern Senegambia cross-border area (The Gambia, Casamance, Guinea-Bissau).

6) The workshop in Sikasso was co-organised and co-financed by the SWAC, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the Municipal Development Partnership (MDP). The CILSS and the WAEMU were involved in the work. The Ministers of the Interior of Burkina Faso and Mali participated in the debates throughout the three days. At the end of the workshop, local public and private actors developed a cross-border action plan. Development partners are supporting this action plan comprised of short-term concrete actions and a dialogue and consultation process. It will be implemented as from the beginning of 2006 and will be the focus of an evaluation workshop six months after its implementation. UNDP has accepted to finance local technical assistance for this process.

7) The workshop in Ziguinchor was co-organised by ENDA-Diapol and the SWAC and co-financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Austrian Cooperation Agency and the SWAC. It brought together one hundred participants from civil society, the private sector and the administrations of the three countries as well as development partners. The workshop developed a 23-point action plan which should also be implemented for a six month period after which a progress review meeting is foreseen to be held in The Gambia. Several development partners are involved to support this process.

1.3. Propagation of the “cross-border concept” and increasing partnerships

8) In April, the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat sent all of the member States’ Ministers of Foreign Affairs a letter informing them of the implementation of the C.I.P. and asking their support for its implementation. On this basis, the Executive Secretariat and the SWAC have carried out awareness-raising missions in countries concerned by the pilot operations. These missions have largely contributed to the preparation and organisation of the Sikasso and Ziguinchor workshops. They have moreover enabled governments and donors to engage in dialogue.

9) The Municipal Development Partnership in West and Central Africa (PDM) has placed one of the components of its regional planning programme supported by the French Cooperation Agency within the framework of the C.I.P. The MDP has financed and led a preparatory study at the Sikasso workshop and produced cartography of the Sikasso – Korhogo - Bobo Dioulasso cross-border zone. The MDP co-financed the Sikasso workshop and provides financial and technical support to the implementation of the cross-border action plan defined at the end of the Sikasso workshop.

10) The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) lead a joint initiative “Integrated Strategies for Sensitive Border Areas

in West Africa”, of which the aim is promote stabilisation programmes in these areas. The Initiative focuses notably on the border between Mali, Burkina Faso and the Côte d'Ivoire, a zone which has been identified by the United Nations Security Council as one to which particular attention should be paid. Therefore UNOWA has placed its activities in this area within the framework of the C.I.P. and co-financed/co-organised the Sikasso workshop.

11) The CILSS has officially expressed its willingness to contribute to the C.I.P.'s implementation. Its Executive Secretariat is currently implementing a support programme in high social and environmental risk zones (ZARESE) with the support of the Italian Cooperation Agency. Some of these zones are in the border regions. The programmes' implementation on the ground will take into account the cross-border dimension in collaboration with ECOWAS and the SWAC.

12) The WAEMU has integrated cross-border cooperation into its strategy and actively participated at the Sikasso workshop.

13) The SWAC has carried out significant work on the collection and circulation of cross-border information: a magazine “Border Diaries” is disseminated regularly articles on realities on the ground and cross-border dynamics; an internet site <http://www.afriquefrontieres.org/> promotes the ECOWAS initiative as regards cross-border cooperation and provides a large number of documents, synthesis and other key sheets on border realities.

II. Assessment and perspectives

14) The activities envisaged have been carried out. After having approved the concept in January 2005, ECOWAS took action:

- A draft legal convention exists,
- Two pilot operations have been identified for which implementation has begun on the ground,
- A certain number of governments in the region are resolutely involved of which has been demonstrated by action undertaken,
- Cross-border cooperation has been integrated into a growing number of regional partners' strategies and several cooperation agencies and international organisations in supporting henceforth the idea and implementation.

15) These first achievements have also enabled the scope to be measured of what remains to be accomplished. By demonstrating the reality of cross-border cooperation potential in West Africa, these achievements have inspired ECOWAS to develop this approach much more systematically and use it as one of the main tools for building a single West African market and the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union. It seems ever-more clear that increasing coordinated actions and joint cross-border projects in the sectors of health, education, culture serving to create good neighbours, agriculture, livestock breeding, the fight against insecurity is the surest way to solidify West African and continental regional construction.

III. Short-term Proposals

3.1. Providing the Executive Secretariat with the necessary means to broaden the experience underway

16) The Executive Secretariat, as a first condition, would need to be provided with the necessary means in order to solidify new objectives as regards cross-border cooperation. A document has been drafted to this effect. The summary of this project covering the period from 2006 to 2008 is presented in Annex 5. An amount of 1.7 million dollars would enable: 1) the creation of post of a special counsellor to the Executive Secretary for cross-border cooperation; 2) the creation of a small technical team with support funds of 800 000 dollars for pilot operations on the ground and the means necessary to continue working to raise public awareness.

17) During the three year period, the aim is to undertake fifteen or so pilot operations and to set up support funds for cross-border initiatives foreseen in the draft Cross-Border Cooperation Convention.

18) In order to guarantee its effectiveness and promote synergies, the project will be guided and monitored by a steering committee composed of representatives from those organisations wishing to be involved in cross-border cooperation, in particular, the SWAC, MDP, the CILSS, the WAEMU and UNOWA.

3.2. Bring together member States around a draft Cross-Border Convention

18) It is essential to bring together experts from member States around a draft Cross-Border Convention as quickly as possible. The cost of this meeting would be in line with the Executive Secretariat's 2006 budget in the amount of 30 000 dollars.

3.3. Develop policy dialogue and strategic partnerships

3.3.1. Encourage the mobilisation of Africans around cross-border cooperation

19) Cross-border cooperation such as is proposed by ECOWAS is undoubtedly one of the best ways to implement the principles expressed in the African Union's vision which are notably the following: 1) Policy integration must be the African Union's *raison d'être*; 2) The integration process must stimulate or re-energise the States' role; and 3) Integration, while being supported by strong leadership, must have a wide and popular foundation. This approach should be,

consequently, one of the priorities of NEPAD's implementation; NEPAD being the African Union's tool to implement its vision.

20) One proposal is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger, currently acting Chairman of ECOWAS, to convince the Commission of the African Union for cross-border cooperation to be incorporated into the Union's strategy. The Executive Secretariat should be responsible for drafting the policy and technical case as well as the draft letters which will support this approach.

3.3.2 Prepare a Euro-African conference on cross-border cooperation

21) Cross-border cooperation has largely contributed and continues to contribute to Europe's construction. The Council of Europe drew up the main legal texts on which this dynamic is based. The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) is the interlocutor of the European Commission in this regard. The European Commission manages the considerable funds which will finance cooperation projects presented by border regions.

22) Furthermore, the European Union negotiates with various African regions, the setting up of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) of which the first phase consists of the creation of veritable regional economic zones.

23) Europe is thus on two accounts justified in supporting cross-border cooperation in Africa. This being the reason that one proposal would be for Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger, currently acting Chairman of ECOWAS, to encourage the Commission of the European Union to organise, in collaboration with the Council of Europe and the AEBR, a Euro-African Conference on cross-border cooperation. The objectives of this conference will be to: 1) have cross-border cooperation included in the implementation of the EPA; and 2) create operational partnerships between African and European border regions. The Executive Secretariat should be responsible for drafting a technical and policy case as well as the draft letters supporting this approach.

Annex 1: Summary of actions carried out in 2005

- 18 January, in Accra, the Council of Ministers adopts the **Memorandum on the cross-border concept** presented by the Executive Secretariat.
- February – April. ECOWAS and the SWAC plan activities for the implementation of the Cross-Border Initiatives Programme for the year 2005 and strengthen partnerships with the United Nations Office for West Africa (**UNOWA**), the Municipal Development Partnership (**PDM**) and the **CILSS**.
- 11 April, the **ECOWAS Executive Secretariat sends to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of their member States a letter and policy text** “Regional Integration and cross-border areas: West Africa in the age of cross-border cooperation”. This letter sets out the activities which will be carried out for the implementation of the C.I.P. in 2005: 1) preparing a community legal framework; 2) launching two pilot operations; 3) C.I.P. awareness-raising missions in member States; and 4) developing a project to provide ECOWAS with human and financial resources needed to carry out the programme for the period 2006-2008.
- 21 and 22 April, Warsaw (Poland). An ECOWAS/SWAC delegation participates at the European Conference on cross-border cooperation co-organised by the Polish Government and the Council of Europe on the 25th anniversary of the Madrid Convention¹. The delegation asks the **Council of Europe to support ECOWAS in the implementation of its Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (C.I.P.) and more particularly the development of a convention aimed to encourage cross-border cooperation in West Africa**. The Council of Europe acknowledges this initiative² and welcomes favourably the idea of collaboration.
- 6 May, Dakar: consultation meeting between ECOWAS, the SWAC, UNOWA, PDM and the NGO, ENDA-DIAPOL **in order to prepare pilot operation launching workshops**.
- 9 to 11 May: **Awareness-raising mission and preparation**³ in view of the pilot operation launching workshop in Sikasso with Mali’s Ministry of the Interior and donors represented in Bamako.
- 15 to 26 June: **Awareness-raising mission and preparation**⁴ in view of the pilot operation workshops in Sikasso and Ziguinchor, to meet with governments and donors represented in Burkina Faso, Senegal and The Gambia.

¹ Legal Convention on cross-border cooperation of communities and cross-border authorities in Europe.

² In the Conference’s Final Declaration, the Polish Minister of the Interior and Administration declared “We have also witnessed the potential extra-European influence of the Madrid Convention, which is taken as an example for possible co-operation between West African states”. Furthermore, in the speech made by the President of the Chamber of Regions of the Council of Europe, Mr. Yavuz Mildon declared: “The influence of cross-border cooperation has thus taken on a two-fold perspective. On one hand, we are committed to establishing this cooperation in Central and Western European countries, indeed in countries of the Caucasus and, on the other hand, this border cooperation is going to also be established on the other side of the Mediterranean, in Africa, more particularly, between West African States. One can note consequently that the Madrid Convention has become an important pillar in democratic stability and international cooperation.”

³ See the Executive Secretary’s letter to Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member States dated 11 April 2005.

- 23 to 30 July, Sikasso – Korhogo – Bobo Dioulasso cross-border zone. **Field mission** to meet with border actors.
- August: Finalisation of the draft document “Cross-border Initiatives Programme”.
- **2006 – 2008** aimed at providing the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat with the human and financial resources necessary to implement the C.I.P..
- August – September 2005, Southern Senegambia cross-border zone. **Field mission** to meet with border actors. **Villagers Forum in preparation of a launching workshop of a pilot operation.**
- 8 September. ECOWAS/SWAC Mission to Strasbourg to the Council of Europe: a) decision to carry out a SWAC/Council of Europe joint mission to Abuja to finalise a draft West African Convention; b) decision to launch a high-level policy dialogue between ECOWAS and the Council of Europe (letter from the ECOWAS Executive Secretary to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe).
- 27 – 29 September, Sikasso. **Launching workshop of a cross-border cooperation pilot operation** in the Sikasso – Korhogo – Bobo Dioulasso cross-border zone under the auspices of ECOWAS and its Cross-border Initiatives Programme. An action plan is defined; its implementation is financed by donors.
- September. On the basis of preparatory work already carried out, the ECOWAS Executive Secretary produces a draft of the Cross-Border Legal Convention.
- 24 – 26 October, Ziguinchor. **Launching workshop of a cross-border cooperation pilot operation** in the Southern Senegambia cross-border zone under the auspices of ECOWAS and its Cross-border Initiatives Programme. An action plan is defined; its implementation is financed by donors.
- November. UNDP sets up financing in order to facilitate a Sikasso – Bobo Dioulasso cross-border cooperation pilot project. Discussions with Swedish Cooperation in order to set up a support project for cross-border cooperation in the Southern Senegambia zone.

⁴ See the Executive Secretary’s letter to Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member States dated 11 April 2005.