



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

**UNOWAS**

BUREAU DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST ET LE SAHEL

## COMMUNIQUÉ

**(ENGLISH)**

### **High level regional colloquium on challenges and prospects of political reforms in West Africa (2015 – 2017)**

**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

**(26 - 27 March 2018)**

As part of its mandate for preventing conflicts and sustaining peace, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), organized, in partnership with ECOWAS Commission, on 26 – 27 March 2018, in Abidjan, a high-level colloquium on « *challenges and prospects of political reforms in West Africa in 2015 – 2017* ».

The two-day colloquium gathered seventy participants, including experts and practitioners, and representatives of regional and international institutions, members of government, civil society and other stakeholders from West Africa countries.

The meeting aimed at examining the challenges and opportunities facing political reforms in the sub-region since 2015 and suggesting concrete recommendations on the way forward for enhanced implementation of such reforms.

On the basis of the political, economic and sociological context of political reforms, the colloquium identified significant lessons for the viability and success of political reforms in West Africa.

In this regard, the colloquium highlighted the crucial importance of inclusive governance and organic social contracts in the negotiation and implementation of political reforms that are sustainable and protected against the excessive influence of money in defining the outcomes of political processes in West Africa, including elections and political reforms.

The participants, representing the sixteen (16) West African countries explored the various experiences of political reforms and emphasized the need for approaches based on political, social and economic inclusivity as necessary conditions for ensuring successful and sustainable political reforms that are predicated on, and include women, youth, civil society, ordinary citizens and marginalized populations in West African states and societies.

The colloquium stressed the urgency of increasing the representation of women in elective offices in the West African sub-region.

The participants agreed to establish a West African Platform for Political Reforms and Good Governance, hereafter 'the Platform'. The Platform will be predicated on an active network of experts and expertise for exchanges on national experiences and dynamics, anchored on the key principles of inclusiveness, participatory dialogue, rule of law and constitutionalism. The objectives of the platform will be:

- i. To support by way of analysis, documentation and dissemination of national experiences and best practices regarding political reforms in the sub-region;
- ii. articulation of experiences and reflections on some of the contentious and/or teething issues associated with political reform processes and the challenges they pose for the consolidation of democracy and good governance in West Africa;
- iii. Building a knowledge base of ideas, best practices and a vibrant community of practice to foster inclusive political reforms as a viable path to building stable, just, peaceful and prosperous democracies in the sub-region.

The platform will bring together institutions as well as experts and stakeholders that can contribute to achieving the above objectives. This includes specialists in constitutional law, the political sciences, parliamentarians, members of political reform commissions and representatives of inter-governmental organizations such as ECOWAS, UNOWAS and international agencies such as the International Institute for Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), among others as well as civil society organisations and women and youth networks.

A committee will be set up by the organizers of the colloquium within the shortest possible period to accelerate the process of creating, organizing and operationalizing the new platform for political reforms, with the secretariat located in UNOWAS. The Platform will be convened periodically to examine the issues enumerated in its objectives.

A report of the current colloquium, including the key issues and the various approaches discussed during this event, as well as the recommendations proposed by the participants, will be finalized and published in the near future and will be the subject of a communication from UNOWAS.

***Abidjan, 27 March, 2018***