



**56th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government  
Statement by Mohamed Ibn Chambas  
Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General  
for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)  
Abuja, 21 December 2019**

**Your Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of Niger and Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government,**

**Your Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and host of the Summit,**

**Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS Member States,**

**Your Excellency General Yakubu Gowon, former Head of State,**

**Your Excellency Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission,**

**Your Excellency Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of African Development Bank,**

**Your Excellency Minata Samate-Cessouma, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, here representing the President of the AU Commission,**

**Your Excellency Abdallah Boureima, President of the UEMOA Commission,**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Distinguished Heads of ECOWAS Institutions and Statutory Appointees,**

**Excellencies Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. It is a privilege to participate in the 56<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.
2. I convey warm greetings from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, who highly admires your commitment to peace, stability, democracy and development in the West Africa subregion.
3. This 56<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session is held against the backdrop of spreading terrorist attacks across West Africa, illustrated by the recent horrendous and gruesome killings of brave soldiers and innocent civilians in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali , accompanied by destruction of infrastructure, forced closure of hundreds of schools, and mass displacements, which are also occurring in the Lake Chad Basin countries. Our deepest sympathies go to the families of the fallen soldiers, victims, the populations and the Governments of the affected countries, who continue to make tremendous sacrifices in the war against terrorism and violent extremism. The times call for all of us to stand together and to summon the best of our values in overcoming this canker that threatens the entire sub-region.

**Excellences,  
Mesdames et Messieurs,**

4. Les attaques terroristes fréquentes et l'insécurité croissante constituent une menace à la sécurité régionale et au-delà. Comme l'a dit le Secrétaire général des Nations unies à l'ouverture de l'Assemblée générale le 25 septembre dernier, et je cite: « {...} il faut qu'on reconnaisse que la lutte contre le terrorisme menée par le G5 Sahel n'est pas seulement une question des pays du G5 Sahel; n'est même pas seulement une question régionale ou africaine, c'est une question globale». Par conséquent, les Forces doivent être dotées des « moyens de lutter efficacement contre le terrorisme ».
5. A cet égard, nous saluons la volonté des Etats membres de la CEDEAO de tout mettre en œuvre pour assurer la paix et la sécurité dans la sous-région, en créant le fonds d'un milliard de dollars destiné à soutenir le plan régional d'action contre le terrorisme dans l'espace CEDEAO.

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

6. To definitively defeat and eradicate terrorism, we must complement the military and security approaches with developmental approaches that address the root causes of this scourge. In this regard, UNOWAS will continue to enhance collaboration with ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, the LCBC, especially its Governors' Forum, and other partners within the framework of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and long-term stabilization.

**Your Excellencies,**

7. On-going political dialogue and electoral processes illustrate the determination of the governments and people of West Africa to use democratic means to resolve political disputes and ensure national cohesion. The support of ECOWAS to these efforts has been crucial.

8. I wish to particularly commend the peaceful conduct of the first round of the presidential election in Guinea-Bissau on 24 November. The role of ECOWAS in supporting the people of Guinea Bissau was commendable and will be instrumental in ensuring that the run-off not only holds, but also that it is peaceful and lays the foundations for strengthening democratic culture and development in the country.

9. Also, as the sub-region prepares for six presidential elections in 2020, we will be expected to collectively leverage all the tools at our disposal to ensure that these elections are peaceful, inclusive and credible, and that they ultimately contribute to the consolidation of democracy. The tensions and contestations already being witnessed in the lead up to these elections, however, remind us that despite the progress made in improving the normative and institutional frameworks, constitutional and electoral processes remain a potential source of conflict. Ensuring consensus, respect of human rights and the rule of law, and promoting inclusivity particularly of women, youth and other vulnerable groups, such as refugees and internally displaced persons, will significantly enhance the legitimacy and credibility of these processes.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

10. In 2020, The United Nations will commemorate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary against the backdrop of rising nationalism, populism and isolationism. It will be a moment to celebrate 75 years of multilateralism founded on solid principles of international cooperation and interdependence, solidarity, mutual respect, mutual accountability and shared values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which have enabled the world to commit to the eradication of wars, genocides, pandemics and poverty.

11. The United Nations is cognizant of ECOWAS as a true embodiment of multilateralism in West Africa, a shining example in Africa and beyond of political cooperation, sub-regional integration, partnership and solidarity. UN is therefore committed to enhancing our engagement with ECOWAS towards improving governance including in the security sector, and addressing climate change, maritime piracy, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime. As well, UN is determined to partner with ECOWAS to create the enabling environment for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, including promoting the role and involvement of women and youth in governance processes.

12. As you prepare to debate the complex issues related to the management of cross-border matters against the backdrop of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, I entreat you to be keenly aware of the remarkable strides made by ECOWAS integration programmes in favour of economic, trade and social development and community citizens. You have the opportunity to dispassionately review the past, identify the challenges and to take corrective measures that deepen the integration process and bring you closer to your vision of an ECOWAS of peoples and not ECOWAS of States.

13. A l'approche des fêtes de fin d'année, je vous souhaite, Excellences Messieurs les Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement un très joyeux Noël ainsi qu'une bonne et heureuse année 2020. J'adresse également mes vœux les meilleurs à tous les citoyens d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Sahel. Puisse l'année nouvelle leur apporte la paix et la quiétude qu'ils méritent.

14. Je vous souhaite de fructueuses délibérations et vous remercie pour votre aimable attention.