



# **WELCOME ADDRESS**

*By*

**DR GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN, *GCON, GCFR***

*President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces*

*of the*

*Federal Republic of Nigeria*

*and*

Chairman, ECOWAS AUTHORITY

**AT THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AUTHORITY OF  
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS**

**ABUJA, 16<sup>TH</sup> – 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2012**

**Your Excellencies**

**Fellow Heads of State and Government**

**Honourable Ministers**

**Chairperson of the African Union**

**H.E. Mr Jean Ping**

**President of ECOWAS Commission**

**Special Representative of the UN Secretary, Sa'idDjinnit**

**Statutory Appointees of ECOWAS Institutions**

**Invited Guests**

**Members of the Press**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is my pleasure to welcome you, once again to Abuja, for today's 40<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority.**

**This Session is unique because we will endorse the appointment of new Commissioners and Vice President of the Commission and also elect a new President of the Commission and Chairperson of the Authority.**

**On behalf of my country Nigeria, and on my personal behalf, let me sincerely thank my Brother Heads of State and Government for the opportunity that was given to Nigeria to serve.**

**I wish to also extend our gratitude to the former Commissioners who steered the affairs of the Commission after the transformation of the Secretariat to a Commission. As pioneer Commissioners, they did a good job and we wish them well in their future endeavours.**

**Worthy of mention is His Excellency Ambassador James Victor Gbeho, the outgoing President of the Commission. Ambassador Gbeho steered the affairs of the Commission with dedication and commitment. We thank him for his service.**

**Your Excellencies, I congratulate our Colleague and Brother, His Excellency President Boni Yayi of the Republic of Benin on his election as the Chair of the African Union. His unanimous election was not only a measure of our confidence in him and his country but also a reflection of our principled stand on issues of interest to our region. Collectively, we have a responsibility to assist him to succeed and continue to build on this unity in the interest of our sub-region.**

**Your Excellencies, you may recall that my late predecessor, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, took over the mantle of leadership as Chair of ECOWAS upon his assumption of office as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in May 2007.**

**Following the health challenges that befell our late Leader, and I took over the leadership of my country as Acting President, you entrusted me with the Chairmanship of the Authority. This was unprecedented in the history of our Organisation, and when I became President, following the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, you reaffirmed your confidence in me when you decided that I continue as Chairman even though Nigeria was preparing for general elections. This is really an exemplary show of love, trust and confidence. These events will surely paint beautiful colours in my memoirs. For all these, I am most grateful.**

**Under my Chairmanship, our Organisation faced numerous political and economic challenges, most of which we resolved successfully; thanks to our collective commitment and dedication to the cause of peace. This was helped by the cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between our Organisation and international organisations, including the African Union, United Nations, and the European Union.**

**This international cooperation was best exemplified during the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire, where we found a common voice in the firm and unequivocal application of our Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. This greatly facilitated the resolution of the crisis. At this Summit, we are pleased to welcome in our midst our brother and dear colleague, President Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire. His presence strengthens our Organisation and we wish him every success in the governance of his country.**

**Your Excellencies, our efforts to consolidate democracy in our sub-region paid off substantially in Liberia, Niger and Guinea Conakry during my chairmanship. In Liberia, an ECOWAS Mini-Summit held in September last year successfully addressed the influx of ex-combatants from Cote d'Ivoire into the country. The resolution of this problem helped in providing a conducive environment for the successful elections held in Liberia in October and November 2011.**

**In Niger, the attempts by the then incumbent President to alter the Constitution to elongate his tenure in office were averted. Subsequently, elections were held which paved the way for Niger to return to the ranks of democratic nations.**

**In Guinea Conakry, where there had been a series of military interventions, ECOWAS has successfully guided the country to hold elections and a return to democracy.**

**On Guinea Bissau, let me condole the government and people for the untimely death of President Bacai Sanhya. Let me also recognize and welcome in our midst the Interim President, H.E. Raimundo Pereira. ECOWAS have charted a path to stabilise the polity through a carefully developed Defence and Security Sector Reform Programme (DSSRP). Our Organisation has invested considerable resources into the Programme and we are confident of success.**

**I urge all stakeholders in Guinea Bissau to join hands to ensure the full implementation of the Programme. The Programme was drawn up and approved with the active participation of Guinea Bissau and other regional stakeholders. As an ECOWAS programme, the ECOWAS Commission is**

**responsible for its coordination and full implementation with full participation of other stakeholders.**

**Your Excellencies, these have been success stories, but there have also been serious challenges in the Sahel Region, Gulf of Guinea and Guinea Bissau. Equally important to mention is the rising scourge of terrorism which now threatens the peace and security of our sub-region.**

**In the Sahel Region, we have witnessed a proliferation of small arms and light weapons, now even more accentuated in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. As a result, countries in the region are threatened by insurgents and terrorists with dire consequences for the peace, stability and prosperity of the sub-region.**

**In the Gulf of Guinea, the increasing incidence of piracy has reached a worrisome dimension. This is compounded with**

**drug trafficking, oil bunkering and human trafficking. All of these require urgent and concerted actions.**

**Your Excellencies, we must not forget that beyond politics, the economic integration of our sub-region remains the fundamental objective of our Organisation. We must, therefore, accelerate our efforts toward monetary union by meeting the convergence criteria, and achieving the harmonisation of tariff regimes.**

**Internally, within the Community Institutions, there is an urgent need for structural reforms in order to enhance capacity and improve transparency. Activities of our Organisation must conform to global best practices to improve confidence and assure growth. It cannot continue to be business as usual if our Organisation must fulfil the vision of our founding fathers.**

**Your Excellencies, there can be no overstating the imperative need that our efforts for integration and peace would be hard to achieve if our unity and cohesion are not assured. Indeed, our Organisation has been universally acclaimed as a role model in sub-regional integration.**

**However, and unfortunately, this quality is now gravely imperilled as clearly demonstrated by what transpired during the election of the African Union Commission Chairperson in Addis Ababa at the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly where some ECOWAS member states broke rank with the consensus position of the sub-region.**

**We need to continue to demonstrate our cohesiveness and speak with one voice as a region. Of the five regions of Africa, West Africa has the highest number of member states. This is an important leverage in our hands. We need to demonstrate it and exploit it to advance the interest of our sub-region. We**

**should not allow such leverage to slip through our hands through advancing individual consideration.**

**We must continue to honour and commend individuals and institutions who help our sub-region towards advancing our vision of a better and greater community of citizens just as we did in the last Summit when we honoured our founding fathers - Generals Yakubu Gowon, Gnassingbe Eyadema, Prof. Adebayo Adedeji and Mr Edem Kodjo.**

**In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the avowed commitment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the integration objectives of our Organisation. We will not relent in this pursuit. I call upon all member-states to come together in unity to serve our Organisation. We should not allow any division in our ranks to be exploited to the detriment of our regional objectives.**

**Your Excellencies, as I relinquish the Chairmanship of this esteemed Organisation, I look forward to working closely with the incoming Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of our Commission. Let me call on all of us to give him the same cooperation and support you gave me to steer our Organisation to realise the laudable objectives set by our founding fathers.**

**I thank you all.**

**Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR  
President,  
Federal Republic of Nigeria**