



**Conference on harmonization of legislation
on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence with
rule of law and human rights safeguards.**

**ECOWAS Commission /Council of Europe
11-13 September 2017
Abuja**

**STATEMENT OF THE
ECOWAS COMMISSION**

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Information Technologies**

11 September 2017

- The Head of Cybercrime Division at the Council of Europe
- The Representative of the European Union Delegation in Abuja
- The Representative of the African Union Commission
- Distinguished participants from ECOWAS Member States
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with immense pleasure that, on behalf of the ECOWAS Commission, I welcome you all to this ECOWAS/Council of Europe Conference on Harmonization of legislation on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence with rule of law and human rights safeguards.

Permit me to commence by expressing our profound gratitude to the Council of Europe for its strong support to the harmonization of our cyber legislations and to the fight against cyber crimes in West Africa. The presence of a large number of participants in this conference shows the commitment of the Council of Europe and of the ECOWAS Commission to the fight against cybercrime in our sub region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may all be aware, at the ECOWAS, our vision is to create an integrated West Africa, with free movement of people, free movement of goods and free movement of services, including ICT services. We want to promote regional integration and economic development of our region in a peaceful and in a democratic environment.

ICT continues to be a catalyst for innovation and its application cuts across many sectors of cooperation among our Member States. It is our belief at ECOWAS that ICT is the engine of our regional integration process in West Africa as we move from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of people. Our ultimate goal is to create a single digital market in West Africa. In the global context, ICT is

indeed key to ensure progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as Information and Communication Technologies are of paramount importance in all development sectors.

However, as we all know, ICT and broader access to the Internet raise many challenges in terms of cybersecurity and cybercrime. Therefore, ICT cannot be the engine of our regional integration and development process without a safe cyber environment in our region. There can be no single digital market in the region without the presence of a secure cyber environment. A good cyber legislation is therefore important to strengthening the economic development of Member States and the region.

Ladies and gentlemen

ECOWAS Member States are currently at varying stages when it comes to cyber legislation. The need to ensure the harmonisation of cyber laws across Member States is indeed vital as cybercrimes are truly borderless.

We are here today because of the partnership between the ECOWAS Commission and Council of Europe to support Member States in strengthening domestic legislations on the basis of the ECOWAS Directive on 'Fighting Cyber Crime', the two ECOWAS related Supplementary Acts on 'Personal Data Protection' and on Electronic Transactions,' as well as the "Budapest Convention on Cybercrime" and "Data Protection Convention 108" of the Council of Europe.

This workshop aims to build the capacities of people involved in the elaboration and reform of legislation related to the application of the ECOWAS Community texts as well as the Budapest Convention.

We therefore need to ensure that our legal frameworks are harmonised in line with the ECOWAS Community texts and in line with the Budapest Convention as harmonisation is a prerequisite for the establishment of a single digital market.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

At this juncture, I would like to reiterate the Commission's gratitude to the Council of Europe not only for the fruitful ongoing partnership with the ECOWAS Commission, but also for the support extended to Member States such as Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal.

This workshop affords me the opportunity to congratulate our Member States that have domesticated the Community Acts and ratified the Budapest Convention. I also would like to seize this opportunity to implore those yet to complete this process, to do so. The domestication of ECOWAS Community acts is critical to the success of our regional integration and development process.

You may also recall that ECOWAS is one of the building blocks of the African Union and that all the actions of our Community contributes to that of our African organisation. That is why I would also like to urge our Member States to ratify the Malabo Convention, which is the African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection

Permit me to conclude, by expressing our hope that by the end of this conference, we would all have the necessary guidance and skills to truly harmonise our domestic legislation on cybercrime and electronic evidence in line with ECOWAS Community texts, in line with the Budapest Convention and in line with the Malabo Convention.

Thank you for your kind attention.