

PRESS RELEASE

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WADEMOS NETWORK LAUNCHED; STAKEHOLDERS PLEDGE SUPPORT TO COUNTER THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN WEST AFRICA

The West Africa Democracy Solidarity ('WADEMOS') Network has been commended for taking the step to mobilize civil society and pro-democracy groups to contribute toward ongoing efforts by regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to counter the dangers posed to democracy in the sub-region.

Delivering the keynote address at the launch of the Network in Accra, Ghana, Ambassador Kamissa Camara, former Mali Foreign Affairs Minister and Senior Advisor for Africa at the U.S. Institute of Peace, called on all stakeholders to support its operations.

"I am so much elated about the timely intervention of a transnational democracy solidarity network...I urge all of you to deliberately support this worthy course as we build an agency of citizens, and amplify and strengthen the voices and preferences of the larger majority of West Africans to protect our democratic consolidation and inclusive growth", she said.

Dr. Abdel Fatau Musah, ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, who formally launched the Network, disclosed that the key strategic goal of ECOWAS' Vision 2050 is the transformation of the region from an ECOWAS of States into an ECOWAS of Peoples, where inclusive prosperity, democracy, peace and security are assured. He, therefore, expressed the sub-regional body's readiness to partner with the Network towards promoting democracy in West Africa.

"I wish to assure you that in the new ECOWAS Commission administration, you will find a committed partner and an active enabler of effective civil society contributions to the regional agenda. It is the expectation of ECOWAS, therefore, that the past and recent salutary roles of our region's civil society will inspire current efforts to reboot civil society activism and advocacy," he said.

Highlighting the initiatives undertaken by ECOWAS to curb the increasing threats to democracy across the sub-region, Ambassador Baba Gana Wakil, ECOWAS Resident Representative to Ghana, said that the ECOWAS has renewed effort to review the 2021 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, convened a pioneer meeting of ECOWAS Traditional and Religious Leaders, set up National Chapters of the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Mechanism in some countries, among others.

"It is very clear that for us to make a headway, the focus has to shift from a-whole-of-Government approach to a-whole-of-Society approach. Hence, the relevance of a gathering such as the one we have here today, which seeks to broaden the

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conversation and amplify the need for non-state actors to make robust contributions,” Ambassador Baba Gana Wakil noted.

In a goodwill message delivered by Ambassador William Awinador Kanyirigi, Senior Advisor on Governance and Peacebuilding at the African Union Commission on behalf of Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Commissioner was optimistic that the Network would become an integral part of the reforms and initiatives being rolled out by the African Union.

“Today’s launch of WADEMOS therefore points to the opportunities for collaboration in a shared vision and strategy between Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD Ghana), WADEMOS, ECOWAS and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AU Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (DPAPS), NETT4PEACE and I-RECKE,” the AU Commissioner observed.

Hon. Thomas Mbomba, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Ghana, also expressed the Ministry’s readiness to partner with and support the activities of the Network.

On his part, Professor Kwasi Prempeh, Executive Director of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) was optimistic that with the current existing opportunities, such as citizens’ consistent strong preference for democracy as shown in Afrobarometer data, the ease to mobilize collective action across borders due to the internet and social media, and the existence of continent-wide and region-specific normative and legal instruments in support of democracy and good governance, the Network’s quest to stem the tide of democratic backsliding within the region is achievable.

The launch of WADEMOS was attended by officials from ECOWAS, Government of Ghana, some members of the diplomatic corps in Ghana, CSO partners, pro-democracy actors and creatives from across West Africa, academia, the media and the funders of the Network, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

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About WADEMOS Network

The West Africa Democracy Solidarity (“WADEMOS”) Network is a non-partisan, independent civil society-led transnational democracy solidarity network consisting of over thirty-five (35) civil society organizations located in 15 countries in West Africa. The purpose of the WADEMOS Network is to mobilize, coordinate, and leverage the collective power of civil society and other pro-democracy actors, resources, and opportunities within the West African Region to advance, defend, and reinvigorate democracy and promote democratic norms and reforms in the sub-region.

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