

## PRESS RELEASE

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### WADEMOS CALLS FOR SWIFT ACTION ON THE REVIEW OF ECOWAS PROTOCOLS AND PRESIDENTIAL TERM LIMITS

On July 9, 2023, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments will be held in Guinea Bissau. This will be the second ordinary meeting of the Heads of States and Government since the coup d'état in Guinea.

At the Summit in Accra, in September 2021, and as part of urgent measures taken to stem the resurgence of coup d'états in the ECOWAS region, the Heads of States instructed the President of the ECOWAS Commission to "initiate the process of reviewing the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in order to ensure democracy, peace and stability in the region." Nine months later, there is no evidence that ECOWAS leaders are prepared to tackle the root causes of unconstitutional changes of government, insecurity and democracy retreat in West Africa.

The WADEMOS Network calls on ECOWAS Heads of States to walk their talk and take on the reforms that will restore hope in democracy including the proposal to limit terms to two for presidents in member countries of the ECOWAS.

The Network recalls with a grave sense of loss and utmost regret the earlier failed attempts at instituting these presidential term limits in the ECOWAS sub-region, particularly at the 47<sup>th</sup> ECOWAS Summit in Accra, where leaders failed to agree on a review of the Protocols to include a maximum two-term limit for presidents across the ECOWAS region. It is equally regretful that this came on the back of the ousting of a civilian ruler who was angling for a third term in Burkina Faso, a state of affairs from which the country is yet to recover.

The adverse repercussions for democracy and governance since then have been immense for the sub-region, with Guinea stumbling into military takeover in the wake of Alpha Conde's third term. Tempted by the allure of power without accountability across the sub-region, authoritarianism has been emboldened, with political and socio-economic marginalization deeply entrenched, civic and political spaces closing and an increasing incidence of dissatisfaction with democracy among Africans, a trend which the latest Afrobarometer figures puts at 57%.

What is troubling about this development is how it is spawning third term ambitions in leaders in the sub-region, stirring indications of the same unbridled brutality, intolerance to dissent and authoritarian posturing that plunged Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso into the political turmoil that now renders their respective futures so uncertain.

Whereas mobilization of efforts to counter term elongation across the sub-region may have been sparse and erratic, the violence and deaths in Senegal in recent times, on account of the suspected third term agenda, does offer compelling evidence of the urgency for strong intervention and expression of commitment by regional authorities such as ECOWAS, UNOWAS and the AU, to finally subdue the threat posed by term elongation to the sub-region.

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Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) | Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Ghana | West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Ghana  
WANEP | Center for Democracy and Development-West Africa, Nigeria | StatView International, Guinea | Center for Democratic Governance (CDG), Burkina Faso

It is therefore imperative that at the forthcoming the 63<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments, authorities move to review the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, with a view towards enacting the maximum two-term limit for presidents across the sub-region and instituting all measures necessary to enforce it. The WADEMOS Network appeals to the Authority of the Heads of States to grant this subject matter the utmost priority.

This, the Network believes, is aligned with the spirit of the Protocols and also in line with the objective of the WADEMOS Network to reverse the trend of democratic decline in the ECOWAS sub-region, in its bid to facilitate the transition from an ECOWAS of countries to an ECOWAS of peoples.

## About WADEMOS Network

WADEMOS is a non-partisan, independent, civil society-led transnational democracy solidarity network. The WADEMOS Network consists of over 35 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) located in 15 countries in West Africa. The WADEMOS Network mobilizes, coordinates, and leverages 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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