

PRESS RELEASE

April 17, 2024

WADEMOS CONDEMNS TIMING OF RECENT 'CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS' BY THE PARLIAMENT OF TOGO; CALLS FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES IN THE COUNTRY

The West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS), a network of pro-democracy national and transnational civil society organizations operating in the West African region, is concerned by the recent adoption by the National Assembly of an amendment to Togo's 1992 constitution, which essentially provides for a parliamentary regime in place of the semi-presidential regime, enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, and hands over the power to elect the country's president by universal, direct and secret suffrage from the citizens of Togo to the parliament.

The Network is troubled by the vehement threat that the amendment poses to the stability of Togo, with the very likely prospect that it will further exclude ordinary citizens' right to express their political choices through a vote, a fundamental right enshrined in Article 4 of African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. The situation is exacerbated by the process of adoption of such a critical amendment. The fact that a referendum was not the prioritized option to adopt the amendment and a decision taken by a Parliament controlled by one party and its affiliates, certainly affects the rights of the citizens to contribute to profound reforms, current affairs, and the governance of the country, also in violation of the African Union Charter.

While welcoming the intervention of the President for the National Assembly to review the amendment, engage in larger consultations, and hold parliamentary and regional elections on April 29, the Network condemns the timing of the proposed changes ahead of the scheduled election in clear violation of Article 2 of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy, Good Governance and Elections, as well as the use of force to suppress the rights of citizens to voice their disapproval of the amendment.

The WADEMOS Network urges the Government of Togo to take into consideration the calls of the people of Togo disapproving of the ongoing process including the voice of pro-democratic actors in Togo, namely the Togolese Conference of Bishops, academics, the CSOs, and the Diaspora, calling on the President to postpone the promulgation of the new Constitution and to initiate an inclusive political dialogue after the results of the next legislative and regional elections.

We take serious note of the decision of ECOWAS Commission, to deploy a mission ahead of the legislative and regional elections. We expect that the mission will host dialogue with the Government of Togo, civil society, political parties, and stakeholders and come out with good practice recommendations on the different issues at stake, their regional implications, and their impact on the ECOWAS of the people, the preservation of peace, and the consolidation of Democracy in West-Africa.

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Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) | Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) | West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) | WANEP | Center for Democracy and Development-West Africa (CDD-West Africa), Nigeria | StatView International, Guinea | Center for Democratic Governance (CDG), Burkina Faso | Africivistes, Senegal | Sindicato de Jornalistas e Técnicos de Comunicação (SINJOTEC), Guinea-Bissau | Association Femmes Leadership et Développement Durable (AFLED), Mali | Network of Women Leaders for Development (RFLD), Benin

We declare our commitment to working with national institutions as well as regional and international towards resolving this current challenge. We believe that constitutional reforms will continue to be an important feature of a democracy and as such will remain a significant part of governance in Togo through an inclusive, deliberative and legitimate process.

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About WADEMOS

WADEMOS is an independent and non-partisan network of diverse national and transnational civil society organizations and civic groups working to promote and defend democracy, good governance, and inclusive development in the West Africa region. WADEMOS mobilizes, coordinates, and leverages the collective voice and power of civil society and other pro-democracy actors, resources, and opportunities within the West Africa region to advance its mission. The current membership of WADEMOS stands at 47 spread across West Africa. The WADEMOS Secretariat is based in Accra, Ghana.

For more information and media interviews, please contact:

Name: Jonah Eledi

Designation: Communications and Digital Platforms Officer

Email: j.eledi@wademosnetwork.org

Phone Number: +233 26 373 5330

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