

ECOSOCC–WEST AFRICA

REGIONAL DIALOGUE AND EXPERIENCE SHARING WORKSHOP

*"ECOWAS of the People: Strengthening Citizens' Participation and Regional
Integration through ECOSOCC Engagement in West Africa"*

Convened by the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS)

Abuja, Nigeria | 3-4 August 2026

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Executive Summary

The Regional Dialogue and Experience Sharing Workshop on ECOSOCC–West Africa brought together civil society leaders, regional networks, ECOWAS Commission officials, and governance experts in Abuja on 3–4 August 2026, under the theme *"ECOWAS of the People: Strengthening Citizens' Participation and Regional Integration through ECOSOCC Engagement in West Africa."* The workshop was convened by the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS) at a moment of acute institutional pressure for ECOWAS, following the formal exit of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger amid wider concerns about shrinking civic space and democratic backsliding across the sub-region.

Participants received a first-hand account from the ECOWAS Commission of the current state of efforts towards the operationalization of ECOSOCC–West Africa. At the moment, a technical and legal framework has been validated through consultations dating back to 2021, but final adoption awaits an inter-institutional review, with a target of presentation to the December 2026 ECOWAS Statutory Meeting. Comparative presentations on the AU-ECOSOCC and UN ECOSOC models surfaced concrete lessons, both positive and cautionary, on accreditation, financing, representation, and civil society coordination. A panel discussion and an extended plenary exchange (participants opted for open plenary discussion over breakout groups on Day Two) produced a substantial body of practical recommendations on institutional design, legitimacy, sustainability, and advocacy strategy.

This report documents the proceedings in full, distils the cross-cutting themes and tensions that ran through both days, and consolidates the recommendations that emerged. Workshop participants further resolved, as an immediate next step, to promote the ECOWAS-ECOSOCC among West African community including young people and establish a coordinating working group to sustain advocacy including engagement with the ECOWAS Commission ahead of the December 2026 Statutory Meetings.

1. Background and Rationale

West Africa is experiencing significant democratic and governance challenges, including unconstitutional changes of government, shrinking civic space, declining public trust in institutions, and increasing insecurity.

Against this backdrop, the establishment and operationalisation of the ECOWAS Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC–West Africa) has been envisioned as a strategic institutional reform to bridge the gap between ECOWAS institutions and the citizens of the region. ECOSOCC–WA is expected to serve as a formal platform for engagement among civil society organisations, women and youth groups, academia, the private sector, and other non-state actors in shaping regional policies and advancing the vision of “ECOWAS of the People.” Although ECOSOCC's legal foundation dates to Article 14 of the 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the same instrument that established the ECOWAS Parliament, the Community Court of Justice, and the ECOWAS Commission, it has remained the only one of these principal institutions never to be operationalised, a gap of over three decades.

To contribute to closing this gap, WADEMOS and its partners convened this Regional Dialogue and Experience Sharing Workshop, bringing regional civil society into direct, working-level dialogue with the ECOWAS Commission and with peer institutions such as the

AU-ECOSOCC and experts from the UN ECOSOC at the precise moment the technical groundwork for ECOSOCC-WA is before ECOWAS's own decision-making organs.

2. Workshop Objectives

The workshop pursued the following objectives:

- To update regional civil society on the current status of ECOSOCC-WA's operationalisation, directly from the ECOWAS Commission.
- To draw comparative lessons from the AU-ECOSOCC and UN ECOSOC engagement frameworks - what has worked, what has not, and what is transferable to the ECOWAS context.
- To identify barriers to ECOSOCC-WA's operationalisation and to generate concrete strategies for enhancing its legitimacy, relevance, trust, sustainability, and impact.
- To agree collective advocacy strategies and action points that regional civil society can carry forward targeting community citizens and the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.

3. Methodology and Note on this Report

This report is based on the rapporteur's live proceedings notes and the full audio transcript of both workshop days, cross-referenced against the official workshop agenda. Speaker attributions follow the agenda and the transcript record; where the transcript did not make a speaker's identity unambiguous, this report describes the intervention by role rather than by name.

Two methodological notes are relevant to how this report should be read. First, the agenda's Day Two strategy session was originally structured as small-group work; participants collectively opted instead for a single extended plenary discussion, on the reasoning that this would allow the room to "agree and move on" rather than fragment a limited and valuable window for direct exchange with ECOWAS Commission representatives. This report reflects that plenary format. Second, the transcript record available to the rapporteur concludes during the Day Two moderated discussion on collective advocacy, ahead of the formal Closing Session. Section 5.4 therefore summarises the Closing Session's agenda structure rather than quoting proceedings directly, and readers should treat the Consolidated Recommendations in Section 7 of this report as the substantive record of the workshop's outcome for that purpose.

4. Day One Proceedings -3 August 2026

4.1 Opening Ceremony

Welcome Remarks - Dr Dauda Garuba, Co-Chair, WADEMOS

Dr Garuba framed the workshop in ECOWAS's own institutional history, tracing the organisation's origins within post-independence era from military governments through to the democratic consolidation that followed transition to civil rule in West Africa. He located the

workshop's purpose within that trajectory: the unfinished shift from an "ECOWAS of states", established in 1975 largely as an arrangement among governments, to an "ECOWAS of the people" that gives citizens a genuine stake in regional decision-making. He described the 1993 Revised treaty and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as a central, if incompletely realised, entry point for that shift, and called on participants to use the two days to "reason together" on how to move the agenda forward.

Opening Remarks and Purpose of Gathering -Paul Osei-Kuffour, Network Coordinator, WADEMOS

Mr Osei-Kuffour welcomed participants on behalf of WADEMOS's network of civil society organisations across Anglophone, Luxophone and Francophone West Africa. He situated the workshop within a wider crisis of multilateral legitimacy, citing the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government, restrictive civic-space legislation in multiple member states, persistent insecurity, and the fragmentation risk posed by the AES states' departure. He argued that government alone cannot drive the transformation the region needs, and that civil society, youth, and women must have a formal, sustainable, trust-based channel of engagement with ECOWAS, the structural gap that ECOSOCC is meant to fill. He expressed WADEMOS' commitment to championing ECOSOCC-West Africa and called on all CSOs and stakeholders including the private sector to collaborate in realizing this objective. He commended ECOWAS for the renewed commitment for ECOSOCC-WA and urged them to sustain the momentum as West African Citizens deserve an institutionalized voice in regional integration and decision-making. He closed by committing the session to a frank, solutions-oriented two days of dialogue: "At the end of the day we have to drive this ourselves. We cannot leave it to our governments alone."

Goodwill and Solidarity Messages

Ms Omolara Balogun, Head of Policy Influencing and Advocacy at the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), delivered a goodwill message on behalf of WACSI's Executive Director. She argued that regional integration should be measured not by the number of protocols signed but by whether citizens experience its benefits and can influence its decisions, and linked ECOSOCC-WA directly to the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance's recognition of citizen participation as a condition of democratic governance. She welcomed the incoming ECOWAS leadership as an opportunity to elevate ECOSOCC's operationalisation to a strategic priority, noting that a functional ECOSOCC would help ECOWAS demonstrate accountability to the more than 350 million citizens it exists to serve.

Mr Bright Sefah, representing AU-ECOSOCC, offered a solidarity message grounded in the African Union's own longer experience of standing up as a continental civil society organ. This process took effect from 2000 to 2004 to move from provision to reality, and until 2005 when it became a unit under CIDO within the AU Commission, before a subsequent relocation to Lusaka where AU-ECOSOCC secretariat began operations as a fully-fledged organ. He welcomed the establishment of ECOSOCC-WA as a critical intervention that will bridge the gap between ECOWAS and West African citizens giving meaning to the aspiration of an ECOWAS of the people. He however cautioned that ECOSOCC-WA's establishment should be seen as an entrenched systematic and inclusive process rather than an event and stressed that it must be built as a platform that augments, rather than competes with other efforts of member states and existing civil society platforms. He concluded by calling on West African civil societies to embrace this initiative to make it work

and pledged AU ECOSOCC's unwavering and continuous support to the successful establishment of the organ.

Statement from the ECOWAS Commission by Dr. Babatunde Afolabi, Director, Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS)

A statement conveyed on behalf of the ECOWAS Commission reaffirmed ECOWAS's commitment to operationalising ECOSOCC, describing it as “belated” relative to the Community's other principal institutions but framing the current moment, anchored in ECOWAS's 50th anniversary and the newly adopted Compact for the Future of Regional Integration as the right one to close that gap. The statement set out the steps already taken including internal ECOWAS consultations, a regional experts' meeting, member-state consultations, and a ministerial-level meeting, and committed to the full operationalization of ECOSOCC-WA, framing it as a vehicle for the inclusion of marginalised groups and as a counterpart institution alongside the ECOWAS Commission, Parliament, and Court of Justice.

4.2 Session Two - Presentation of the Proposed ECOWAS ECOSOCC-West Africa Model

Presentation - Mr Constant Gnacadja, ECOWAS Commission (Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding)

Presenting on behalf of the ECOWAS Commission on Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr Gnacadja set out the legal, institutional, and procedural architecture for ECOSOCC-WA. He confirmed its legal basis under Article 14 of the 1993 Revised Treaty, the same provision, and the same institutional standing, as the ECOWAS Parliament (Article 13), the ECOWAS Court of Justice, and the ECOWAS Commission, and traced the consultation process from its 2021 origins (under an ECOWAS–UNOWAS–UNDP initiative on “ECOWAS Post Vision 2020: Strengthening Regional Capacity for Conflict Prevention” project, with workshops in Accra and Abuja) through internal ECOWAS consultations in Lagos (December 2023), regional civil society engagement in Abuja (February 2024), and technical and ministerial consultations in March 2026.

He confirmed that supplementary acts, rules of procedure, an operational framework, an organogram, and a three-year indicative budget have been validated. However, the an inter-institutional committee has been established to resolve outstanding matters and refine the framework before it returns to the ECOWAS Council and, ultimately, the Authority of Heads of State and Government for approval, with the December 2026 Statutory Meeting identified as the next milestone.. On the proposed General Assembly structure, he outlined a 65-member model: a minimum of three seats per member state (36 seats), a small number of seats for the ECOWAS Commission, and the remainder allocated by population using the same formula applied to the ECOWAS Parliament, meaning larger states such as Nigeria would hold more seats than smaller states such as Cape Verde. He was explicit that membership would be institutional (non-state actor organisations), not individual, with eligibility criteria still to be finalised in a technical document.

Plenary Question and Answer Session

The Q&A that followed was extensive and substantive, and surfaced most of the cross-cutting concerns that recurred through the remainder of the workshop. Key lines of deliberations included:

- **Membership and constitution:** participants pressed for detail on how the 65-member General Assembly would be constituted, how the secretariat would be formed, and how civil society itself would drive the process; Mr Gnacadja's population-weighted, non-state-actor model (above) was his response. Again, it came up that while ECOSOCC must ensure a balance in representation across the various sub-regional geographical blocs and diverse stakeholders, it should also be purposeful in involving established professional regional networks to anchor ECOSOCC's membership and strengthen accountability and donor confidence.
- **Feedback and inclusion mechanisms:** several participants observed that the model as presented did not yet show how civil society recommendations would be fed back through ECOWAS's decision-making layers, contrasting this with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), where side events and civil society recommendations are formally incorporated into proceedings. Participants called on ECOWAS to consider this proposal.
- **Nomenclature:** A participant proposed the name "Economic, Social and Cultural Council" risks being read narrowly, and recommended the founding protocol explicitly state that ECOSOCC's advisory mandate is not limited to economic, social, and cultural matters but extends to governance issues generally.
- **Fragmentation and coordination:** A participant called on ECOWAS to ensure that commitments as presented translate from paper into state-level budgetary and policy action before and after the establishment of ECOSOCC.
- **Financing:** participants pressed on the sustainability of ECOSOCC's financing amid declining Official Development Assistance globally (citing the UN's recent withdrawal of support to peace operations in Somalia as an illustrative warning). It came up that ECOWAS has drawn a three-year budget leveraging its resources, alongside plans for a five-year strategy and resource mobilisation plan.
- **Inclusion safeguards:** a participant flagged the risk that membership criteria could inadvertently exclude persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups unless a deliberate inclusion clause is built in from the outset.
- **Diaspora engagement:** The diaspora came up as an important constituency for consideration. Mr Gnacadja confirmed a planned study on diaspora inclusion as part of the technical documentation.
- **Critical media questioning:** A representative from the media pressed the hardest line of questioning, asking whether ECOSOCC risks becoming another underfunded, distant advisory body (citing widespread non-compliance with ECOWAS Court of Justice judgments as a cautionary precedent), and how ECOSOCC would function amid rising regional nationalism. Mr Gnacadja cautioned civil society to be guided by the past experiences and earlier attempt at operationalizing ECOSOCC-WA as this presents a new opportunity.

4.3 Session Three - ECOSOCC Engagement: Lessons, Experiences and Knowledge Exchange

Presentation 1- Mr Austin Aigbe, Regional Advocacy Officer, WADEMOS: Advancing the Establishment of ECOSOCC-WA

Mr Aigbe opened with the historical lesson of WASO/WACSO (the West Africa Civil Society Forum), an earlier CSO-led attempt to build toward an ECOSOCC-equivalent role, which achieved genuine reach across the sub-region before fragmenting due to funding, management, and leadership-recruitment failures. He presented a comparative mapping of ECOSOCC-equivalent models (AU, UN, and other regional economic and social councils) and proposed that ECOSOCC-WA be established as a permanent, not ad hoc, platform, built bottom-up from national civil society platforms through sectoral committees to an executive committee and General Assembly, to avoid the legitimacy and "crowding at the top" problems that can affect top-down models.

On membership, he argued for a deliberately broad definition of "non-state actors" not only registered NGOs, but women's groups, persons-with-disability organisations, youth networks, trade unions, academia and think tanks, private-sector platforms, faith-based institutions, and diaspora networks, cautioning that if the process is framed narrowly around "civil society" or "NGOs," larger, better-resourced organisations risk capturing ownership of a space meant for the whole of the people. He proposed concrete safeguards: population-weighted representation, a substantive (not tokenistic) 50% gender-representation target, linguistic inclusion across English, French, and Portuguese, and accreditation criteria covering legal status, internal democratic governance, financial transparency, and genuinely pan-regional (not solely national) orientation.

On advocacy, he proposed a phased short-, medium-, and long-term plan, stakeholder mapping across primary (member states), secondary, and tertiary (development partner) actors, and the strategic use of individuals with insider institutional knowledge, including retired ambassadors, to carry technically informed, diplomatically calibrated messaging. He was explicit that ECOSOCC's funding should ultimately come from ECOWAS's own budget rather than depend on external donors.

Presentation 2 - Mr Bright Sefah, AU-ECOSOCC: Institutional Lessons and Best Practices

Mr Sefah's technical presentation set out AU-ECOSOCC's governance safeguards in detail, offered explicitly as transferable lessons for ECOSOCC-WA. His presentation largely touched on the AU-ECOSOCC structures, programs and sustainability mechanisms. On membership, he described a strict two-year rotation limit for civil society leadership positions within AU-ECOSOCC, adopted specifically to prevent the entrenchment he described bluntly: "some civil societies come in, they never leave." Membership is drawn from national, regional, continental, and African Diaspora civil society organisations, with representation also provided for six ex-officio CSOs nominated by the AU Commission. The current structure provides for three CSOs from each AU Member State, 10 operating at regional level, eight at continental level, and 20 representing the African Diaspora. He described the recurring challenge of member states attempting to interfere the process to nominate proxy "civil society" organisations. As an integrity measure, he explained that the AU-ECOSOCC's has an independent verification by an interdepartmental committee including the AU Commission's Office of Legal Counsel, combined with civil-society self-vetting mechanisms.

He listed further recommendations drawn from AU-ECOSOCC's experience since becoming operational in 2019: a sustainable financing strategy (still under development even at AU level), strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks, digital citizen engagement, deliberate youth and women's representation across all activities, early and sustained partnership with universities and think tanks, and clear feedback loops showing citizens how their input is

reflected in policy. He recommended the ECOSOCC Annual Citizens Forum held on yearly basis ahead of AU Summit for citizens to present their positions and perspectives on regional matters bordering on the AU's engagement with multilateral institutions, global governance, and regional peace and security, among other pressing matters.

Presentation 3 - Adekunle Lukman: The UN ECOSOC Engagement Framework

Presenting in an independent expert capacity Lukman offered a comparative analysis of what has and has not worked at UN ECOSOC level. On the positive side, he highlighted the UN's institutionalised participation mechanisms, differentiated accreditation statuses, the right to submit written statements and organise side events at the General Assembly and High-Level Political Forum, and the shadow-reporting practice used in reviews such as the UN Convention Against Corruption (illustrating this with Nigeria's implementation of 46 of 57 recommendations from its 2014 review, attributable in part to sustained civil society engagement in the review process).

On what has not worked, he was direct: UN ECOSOC's accreditation process is so cumbersome that an application begun in 2026 might not be resolved until 2030, and he urged ECOWAS not to replicate this. He also flagged financial barriers to participation, unequal representation favouring well-resourced organisations,

4.4 Panel Discussion - Creating an ECOSOCC Fit for Purpose

Moderated by Ms Omolara Balogun (WACSI), the panel comprised Dr Kojo Asante (Director of Policy Engagement and Partnerships, CDD-Ghana), Mr James Ugochukwu (Regional Executive Secretary, West Africa Civil Society Forum, WACSOF), Mr Ibrahima Kane (Governance Expert and former Advocacy Officer, Open Society Foundations), Ms Bernadette French (Programme Manager, Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone), and Mr John Oluwafemi Adebayo (Head of Research and Strategy, Kimpact Development International). The moderator framed the session around a single organising question: how does ECOWAS build an ECOSOCC that is not merely relevant, but indispensable; independent yet collaborative; representative yet efficient; innovative yet accountable?

Dr Kojo Asante - Institutional Priorities

Dr Asante argued that ECOSOCC is not optional but an imperative, given the transnational nature of the region's threats, citing Sahel insecurity and the contested governance future of the region as evidence that West African states cannot address these challenges in isolation from their citizens. His three priorities: (1) legitimacy and representation must be built from the national level upward, since how civil society organises locally determines the credibility of whoever represents it regionally; (2) ECOSOCC-WA should avoid duplicating existing structures, where an AU-ECOSOCC or national civil society platform can be adapted for ECOWAS purposes, it should be, rather than building a parallel structure from scratch; and (3) ECOSOCC must pursue deliberate self-financing and ownership to inoculate itself against legitimacy challenges tied to donor dependence, while also making the case to the private sector that peace and stable institutions are preconditions for business to thrive.

Mr James Ugochukwu - Lessons from WACSOF

Responding to a direct question on how ECOSOCC can be trusted as a bridge rather than perceived as "another ECOWAS organ," Mr Ugochukwu situated the answer in WACSOF's own history: founded to fill the very gap left by ECOSOCC's non-operationalisation since 1993, WACSOF achieved genuine reach across the ECOWAS member states through

fourteen thematic pillars aligned with ECOWAS's own Vision 2020 and Conflict Prevention Framework, and received ECOWAS funding for a period. Its decline, he argued, is directly attributable to unintentional, politicised leadership recruitment along regional and linguistic lines, compounded by technical and managerial weaknesses, a fate he warned ECOSOCC-WA must consciously design against through an intentional, merit-based recruitment framework. He further argued that ECOSOCC must not become another regulatory layer over civil society, citing the recurring introduction of restrictive NGO legislation in Nigeria's National Assembly as the kind of instrument ECOSOCC should never become.

Mr Ibrahima Kane - Historical Context, Representation, and Institutional Design

Mr. Kane grounded his intervention in the deeper history of civil society's accession to regional and continental bodies, noting that ECOWAS's 1993 decision to establish ECOSOCC alongside the Parliament and Court of Justice was deliberate, explicitly intended to bring trade unions, the private sector, and citizens generally into the post-Cold War democratic opening and that ECOWAS has, in practice if not in institutionalised form, funded civil society participation before (citing a period in which ECOWAS provided approximately US\$200,000 annually to WACSOF). He argued the central task now is to formalise a practice that already exists informally, while explicitly avoiding making ECOSOCC-WA membership the only mandatory and exclusive "entry point" for any engagement with ECOWAS; civil society organisations, he argued, must remain free to engage ECOWAS directly and to organise flexibly around policy issues rather than being funnelled through a single formal channel.

On the historic Anglophone–Francophone–Lusophone divide as an instrument of regional division, Mr Kane offered a frank historical account, including the linguistic dimensions of ECOWAS's own founding diplomacy, while arguing that West Africa's lived experience of free movement across these linguistic lines shows the divide is navigable in practice, and that ECOSOCC's structure should reinforce rather than entrench it.

Asked what governance and accountability mechanisms should be embedded from the outset, Mr. Kane offered what several participants regarded as the panel's most consequential recommendation: that the instrument establishing ECOSOCC-WA should be adopted as a **Supplementary Act** under the Revised Treaty, not merely a statute, a statute, as at AU-ECOSOCC, can be altered at any single meeting, whereas a Supplementary Act carries the durability of treaty-level protection against reversal by a change in institutional leadership.

Ms Bernadette French - Trust, Inclusivity, and Sustainability

Ms French warned explicitly against ECOSOCC becoming as elitist as the room convened to design it, cautioning that even within civil society there is a real and consequential gap between well-resourced, urban, "elitist" organisations and grassroots or rural CSOs. She proposed three guiding, non-negotiable principles: genuine inclusivity structured into ECOSOCC's design (not mere attendance at side events without influence over outcomes); trust built through demonstrated follow-through between civil society positions and state action, since an advisory body's influence ultimately depends on states honouring the relationship; and meaningful, sustained engagement of women, youth, and vulnerable groups as the foundation of ECOSOCC's long-term legitimacy and legacy.

Mr John Oluwafemi Adebayo - Awareness, Advocacy, and the Next Generation

Mr. Adebayo identified four recurring strands across the day's discussion: limited public awareness of ECOWAS's work generally; ECOSOCC's limited formal influence on decisions

given its advisory-only status (arguing this role must nonetheless be strengthened, drawing on AU and UN precedent for accreditation and consultative status); persistent coordination failures among civil society organisations working in silos; and the imperative to cultivate a new generation of civic leaders, citing the AU's dedicated youth-ambassador programme as a model ECOWAS currently lacks. He called for investment in multilingual digital participation, including online town halls, and for a renewed focus on implementation over further instrument-drafting.

Panel Close: Political Will and Next Steps

In closing exchanges, panellists agreed to move from advocacy “defence” to “offence”: identifying and directly engaging political champions (including incoming ECOWAS leadership), building relationships with political parties as an underused channel of influence despite their limitations, and, critically, resolving to establish either a working group or coordinating group before the workshop's close to formalise and sustain civil society's collective engagement with ECOWAS going forward, explicitly inviting sector platforms not represented in the room (trade unions, the private sector) to join.

5. Day Two Proceedings- 4 August 2026

5.1 Recap of Day One

The second day opened with the participants' recap of Day One discussions, per the agenda.

5.2 Strategy Session - Barriers to Operationalisation; Enhancing Legitimacy, Relevance and Trust; Enhancing Sustainability and Impact

Participants agreed to conduct this session as a single extended plenary rather than in breakout groups, in order to reach shared positions directly rather than reconcile parallel group outputs afterwards. Discussion ranged widely and is synthesised here by theme.

Barriers to Operationalisation

- Risk of institutional overlap or clash between ECOSOCC and existing ECOWAS organs performing related functions, requiring deliberate scoping to avoid duplication.
- Twenty-three years of slow progress since the 1993 decision to move toward an “ECOWAS of the people” were cited as evidence that political will, not technical design, is the binding constraint; participants pressed for a clearer public blueprint of how civil society intends to move ECOWAS decision-makers from validation to adoption, drawing an explicit comparison to Nigeria's “Not Too Young to Run” campaign, which moved from proposal to law through defined stages of advocacy escalation.
- Representation of key non-state constituencies- particularly the private sector, trade unions, and youth organisations was noted as inadequate and raised as a legitimacy risk for the process, not only for the eventual institution.

Enhancing Legitimacy, Relevance and Trust

- Securing the ECOWAS Parliament's support was identified as a priority, reframing the relationship from competition to alliance, noting the Parliament's own interest in expanded authority as a possible point of shared interest.

- Strategic communication was identified as a standing gap requiring dedicated capacity (not an incidental task for already-stretched leadership), spanning targeted messaging, stakeholder engagement, and digital town halls.
- Participants proposed drawing explicitly on AU-ECOSOCC precedents such as its Annual Citizens' Reflection Forum, and on UN ECOSOC mechanisms, as concrete models for public-facing legitimacy-building activities, while cautioning against uncritically importing either model wholesale.
- Comparative learning beyond AU and UN was also proposed, including the Organisation of American States' model, in which the OAS directly funds civil society participation in a more demand-driven relationship, offered as a contrasting model worth further study.

Enhancing Sustainability and Impact

- Broadening the definition of "civil society" beyond NGOs was formally agreed in the room, to explicitly include professional bodies, trade and transport unions (the West African Road Transport Union was cited as an organisation with daily, direct contact with ordinary citizens that civil society itself often lacks), faith-based institutions, and the private sector (Chambers of Commerce and prominent regional business figures were specifically named as under-engaged potential partners and funders).
- Existing ECOWAS specialised institutions: the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (Lomé) and the West African Health Organisation (Bobo-Dioulasso) were identified as existing channels through which private-sector and health-sector non-state actors already engage ECOWAS, and thus natural entry points for ECOSOCC-WA's stakeholder mapping.
- Participants noted that several multi-tier structures already exist in ECOWAS's civil-society-facing architecture, sectoral cluster committees, national chapters, a citizens' forum, among others exist at regional and national level and recommended these be consciously leveraged rather than duplicated.
- A formal accountability point was raised and accepted: this workshop's outcomes must not end with a submitted report; participants who raised recommendations were reminded they bear responsibility for helping to carry them forward, including through named champions (Ambassador Remi and Mr Ibrahima Kane were specifically identified as well placed to lead engagement with incoming ECOWAS leadership).

5.3 Moderated Discussion- Strategies for Collective Advocacy, Policy Influence and Recommendations

This session translated the morning's thematic discussion into advocacy strategy and formal decisions taken by the room.

Advocacy Strategy and Targeting

- Participants agreed that any process to finalise ECOSOCC-WA should proceed with civil society as a formal partner from the outset rather than being consulted only after key decisions are made.
- Participants recommended producing a short, evidence-based policy brief to support advocacy engagements, and explicitly recommended using the Heads of State's own recent adoption of the Compact for the Future of Regional Integration, which itself calls for strengthened citizen engagement and the ECOWAS of States as leverage. If states

have already endorsed the principle, resistance to its institutional expression in ECOSOCC becomes harder to justify.

- Participants further resolved to pursue direct outreach to identified individual champions, including sending formal, jointly signed correspondence to incoming ECOWAS leadership, and leveraging personal networks of civil-society alums and allies.

Broadening the Coalition

- The workshop formally noted the need for deliberate outreach to key stakeholders and institutions.
- Participants recommended embedding a dedicated youth engagement strategy building on existing structures; WADEMOS's Next Gen Initiative, WACSI's Youth Fellowship Programme, WANEP, MFWA, KIMPACT, among others
- A multi-channel, multilingual communications and branding strategy was recommended, deliberately combining digital platforms with traditional and terrestrial media (radio and community channels were specifically raised) to reach rural and grassroots audiences with limited digital access, and tailoring content format and register by audience segment, including youth-oriented formats for younger demographics.

Process Discipline

- Participants recommended that implementation responsibilities be explicitly assigned rather than left as broadly-owned commitments ("who does what"), and that the coalition develop position papers, technical and policy briefs, and potentially in-country surveys to ground its advocacy in evidence.
- Participants underlined the continued need for internal civil society consensus-building; a space for the coalition to align its own positions as a precondition for credible, unified external advocacy, distinct from workshops such as this one.

7. Consolidated Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn directly from the two day proceedings documented.

7.1 To the ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Institutions

#	Recommendation
1	Adopt the ECOSOCC-WA founding instrument as a Supplementary Act under the Revised Treaty, rather than a statute, to protect it from unilateral amendment by future leadership changes.
2	Explicitly clarify in the founding legal text that ECOSOCC-WA's advisory mandate extends to governance issues generally, and is not limited by the "Economic, Social and Cultural" nomenclature.
3	Reopen and formally institutionalise a civil society speaking slot before the Authority of Heads of State and Government, with a defined protocol for how citizen input is recorded and fed back into decision-making.

#	Recommendation
4	Design accreditation and membership procedures to be simple and time-bound,
5	Build binding inclusion safeguards into the membership formula for persons with disabilities, substantive (not numeric-only) gender parity, youth, and linguistic representation across English, French, and Portuguese. Also consider balancing membership across regional and national level organizations.
6	Adopt governance safeguards: independent and transparent vetting process, a conflict-of-interest policy, and fixed-term rotation, where applicable.
7	Explore multiple financing strategy with active CSOs participation where applicable but the foundation should stand on a sustainable financing strategy by ECOWAS.
8	Establish formal coordination arrangements between ECOSOCC-WA, AU-ECOSOCC, and relevant UN mechanisms to enable joint learning and avoid duplicative demands on the same civil society organisations.
9	Formally frame ECOSOCC-WA, in the founding instrument and in Commission communications, as complementary to the ECOWAS Organs, not competing with their functions.
10	Present the validated ECOSOCC-WA framework, inclusive of the inter-institutional committee's review, for adoption at the December 2026 ECOWAS Statutory Meeting, as committed by the Commission.

7.2 To WADEMOS and the Civil Society Coalition

	Recommendation
1	Formalise the working/coordinating group resolved in plenary, with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities, to sustain advocacy momentum ahead of the December 2026 Statutory Meeting.
2	Develop a short term plan for the coalition's own engagement with stakeholders including ECOWAS.
3	
4	Produce a short, evidence-based policy brief on the strategic case for ECOSOCC-WA for use across advocacy engagements with member states, the Parliament, and other stakeholders.
5	
6	Pursue formal alliance-building with the ECOWAS Parliament on the basis of shared institutional interest, rather than treating it solely as an obstacle.
7	Formally broaden the stakeholder coalition to include the private sector (Chambers of Commerce and regional business leaders), trade and transport unions, faith-based organisations, diaspora networks, and academia/think tanks, etc.

	Recommendation
8	Build a formal youth engagement strategy leveraging existing platforms; the WADEMOS Next Gen Initiative and the WACSI Youth Fellowship Programme, rather than creating parallel mechanisms.
9	Design a multi-channel, multilingual communications and branding strategy for ECOSOCC-WA combining digital platforms with traditional and terrestrial media, tailored by audience segment.
10	Establish a two-session virtual engagement platform to popularise ECOWAS. .
11	
12	Establish an internal civil society consensus-building mechanism to align positions ahead of external advocacy engagements.
13	Formalise relationship-based advocacy with identified individual champions, including coordinated, jointly signed outreach to incoming ECOWAS leadership.

7.3 To ECOWAS Member States

	Recommendation
1	Support ECOSOCC-WA's operationalisation in realization of Agenda 2025 on ECOWAS of the People
2	Support well-organised, transparent, and representative national civil society platforms to strengthen the legitimacy of national representatives at ECOSOCC-WA level.

7.4 To Development and International Partners

	Recommendation
1	Support the sustainable financing and capacity needs of ECOSOCC-WA's operationalisation
2	Facilitate structured peer-learning exchanges between ECOSOCC-WA and comparable models, including AU-ECOSOCC, UN ECOSOC, the OAS civil society engagement framework, and the EU Economic and Social Committee.

8. Conclusion

This workshop met civil society and the ECOWAS Commission at a genuinely consequential moment: a technically validated ECOSOCC-WA framework, and a Commission publicly committed to ECOSOCC's operationalisation targeting the December 2026 Statutory Meeting.

Several themes ran through the discussions. Legitimacy requires credible, inclusive, bottom-up representation. Autonomy demands safeguards against political capture.

Sustainability requires financing strategies beyond donor dependence. Inclusivity must encompass gender parity, youth, persons with disabilities, and linguistic balance. Technology offers opportunities for digital participation but must complement grassroots engagement. Advocacy must be evidence-based, targeted, coordinated, and politically informed. Legal durability requires establishment by Supplementary Act to ensure permanence.

What the two days of dialogue made clear is that the remaining obstacles are substantially political and organisational rather than technical: institutional trust with the Parliament, the durability of the legal instrument chosen, the breadth and legitimacy of civil society's own coalition, and a credible financing pathway that does not compromise independence.

The workshop's participants did not treat these as someone else's problems to solve. The resolution to form a coordinating working group, the named champions tasked with leading direct engagement with incoming ECOWAS leadership, and the explicit, self-critical acknowledgement that civil society must avoid repeating previous institutional failures, together suggest a coalition prepared to take responsibility for the outcome it is advocating for. The recommendations consolidated in Section 7 of this report are offered in that spirit: as a working agenda for the months between this workshop and the December 2026 Statutory Meeting, and beyond.