

**OPENING REMARKS BY MADAM ANN THERESE NDONG-JATTA, DIRECTOR OF UNESCO
BREDA AT THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF ECOWAS MINISTERS OF EDUCATION HELD AT THE
ECOWAS COMMISSION, ABUJA, NIGERIA, 1ST – 6TH OCTOBER 2012**

Chairperson of the Opening Ceremony

Chairman of the ECOWAS Commission

Honourable Ministers of Education of the ECOWAS Community

Commissioner for Human Development and Gender

Development Partners of the ECOWAS Community here present

Directors and Staff of the Human Development and Gender

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very delighted indeed to have the opportunity to make a statement at this very important opening ceremony of the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Education of the ECOWAS Sub-region.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the experts from Member State for the dedication and commendable work done over the past week addressing critical issues of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the Culture of Peace, in preparation for the meeting of the Ministers.

These are three thematic areas that are critical to the continued development of the sub-region as they could provide for the development of effective and efficient education systems in the ECOWAS space; strengthen partnerships to create employable skills for the teeming population of young people; and instill in our people a culture of peace that will ultimately enable us to live in peace in

a sub-region which has seen more than its fair share of conflict and violence in the recent past. As we are all aware, EMIS, TVET and gender and culture under which the education for culture of peace are three of the areas of focus adopted by the Conference of Ministers of the African Union (AU) for the Second Decade of Education for Africa.

I would wish to single out the ECOWAS Human Development and Gender for the sterling work in executing the priorities of the Second Decade. I am therefore not surprised that ECOWAS has emerged as one of the more focused of the regional communities in working with Member States on the AU Second Decade of Education for Africa. The Commission has demonstrated that Africa can indeed its on capacity to confront the issues of development. Given the high quality of work in these focus areas by the experts and that time is of necessary financial and technical assistance, both domestic and external for a successful implementation.

Chairperson, Honourable Ministers

As we work towards our common goal in education, it is important to uphold the principle of consolidation. This will enable us to build on what we have achieved so far, so that we can realise progress in a short space of time. Given the holistic inter-related nature of issues in education, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the Honourable Ministers that there are few other priority areas that need their collective attention, especially the quality of learning and teacher professional development, notably, their training, status, remuneration and working conditions which are critical to the performance of teacher. The appeal in the message on Teachers Day is to take a stand for teachers and defend their rights and their conditions. Africa needs up to 4 million teachers before 2015 to achieve the EFA Goals. Without an adequate numbers and quality teachers, building the human capabilities to claim the Twenty-first century would be an illusion.

Excellencies

Permit me to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the invitation from ECOWAS to attend this Conference of Ministers of Education Meeting. On behalf of Madam Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, I am

pleased to report that UNESCO continues to pledge its readiness to accompany Member States in the mobilization of partners and resources towards the cause of education in the ECOWAS sub-region.

On this note, I wish you all very fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.