

**FORUM OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE
ECOWAS MEMBER STATES**

**26-27 JANUARY, 2006
BAMAKO – MALI**

FINAL DECLARATION

1. Upon the invitation of H.E. the Minister of Social Development, Solidarity and Elderly People of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Djibril TANGARA, the Forum of Ministers of Social Development of ECOWAS met on 26 and 27 January , 2006 in Bamako, Mali. The Ministers of Social Development of the following countries attended this first meeting organized in the sub-region with the assistance of UNESCO: Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
2. Apart from the Ministers and their Advisors, the meeting was also attended by the Minister of Social Development of South Africa, H.E. Mr.Zola SKWERYIYA, and the representatives of: UNESCO (Mr. Pierre Sane, Assistant Director General for Human and Social Sciences), the African Union Commission (Adv. Bience Gawanas), ECOWAS (Mr. Mamadou Gueye) and UEMOA (Mr. Brehima Tounkara).
3. In his opening address, H.E the Minister of social Development, Solidarity and Elderly People of Mali underlined the importance of cooperation for better integration within the West Africa sub-region and Africa in general. He reaffirmed the commitment of Mali to work towards the elaboration and implementation of harmonized social policies in the ECOWAS space. Various speeches delivered during the opening ceremony all supported the same views and reaffirmed the need for coordinating social policies and better management of social transformations with a view to fighting poverty and exclusion. Discussions were carried out on issues related to nutrition, employment, in particular youth employment.
4. Approving the initiative for organizing this first Forum, the Ministers present, committed themselves to support it and adopted the following Declaration:

DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

We, Ministers of Social Development of the ECOWAS Member States, meeting in Bamako on 26 and 27 January, 2006:

- Recalling various resolutions and recommendations adopted at international and continental levels asserting the social dimension of development;
- Recognizing the predominant place which needs to be accorded to social issues in the elaboration of national development policies;
- Reaffirming our political will and determination to promote development policies which take into account all human development dimension, and to fight against poverty;
- Concerned about supporting our countries in strengthening sub-regional and regional integration and in looking for greater solidarity;
- Saluting the cooperation and assistance of regional and sub-regional institutions present at this Forum (AU, ECOWAS, UEMOA) to all the ECOWAS Member States;
- Commending UNESCO for assistance provided to our countries in organizing this Forum;
- Urging, in particular, regional (AU) and sub-regional (ECOWAS, UEMOA) institutions to contribute to the institutionalization of the Forum.

Decide to that effect:

- To take all necessary measures to strengthen cooperation among our countries in the field of social development and institutionalization of the Forum of Ministers of Social Development of the ECOWAS Member States as an instrument of cooperation to favour consultations, dialogue and exchange of experiences in order to identify the best means of promoting common social policies;
- To set up a permanent structure to support the Forum and to safeguard the outcome of this first meeting and to confer the Chairmanship to the host country Mali, represented by its Minister of Social Development, as well as the Permanent Technical Secretariat;

- Mandate the Chairperson of the Forum, Mr. Djibril TANGARA, Minister of Social Development, Solidarity and Elderly People of Mali, elected by acclamation for a one-year period, to define, in consultation with his colleagues and focal points appointed within the respective Ministries, practical modalities for: organizing the Forum, especially the organization of the semestrial Forum, the networking of relevant national institutions; and the establishment of sustainable cooperation based on the experiences of the other sub-regions of Africa, Latin America and Asia, as well as define modalities for collaboration with the Civil Society and Research Institutions;
- To adopt the principle of appointing the country which will host the next meeting and assure the chairmanship; to endorse the candidature of Guinea;
- To take note of the proposal of Sierra Leone to host the next thematic meeting.