

**Statement by Madam Angelique Weeks, Chairperson of the Liberia  
Telecommunications Authority and Liberia's Head of Delegation  
Opening Ceremony of the ECOWAS ICT Experts Meeting  
Niamey, Niger  
20 – 22 June 2016**

The Honorable Minister of Telecommunications, Posts and Digital Economy of Niger, the Chairman of the Board of the Regulation Council of Niger, the Commissioner of Telecommunications & IT of ECOWAS, the Chairman of the Conference of Ministers of West Africa Postal Conference our distinguished partners, fellow experts from member countries of ECOWAS, Other Distinguished Delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thanks to Niger for hosting. I bring you greetings on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia. I convey the regrets of the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications for being unable to attend; but assure you that Deputy Minister Titus and I are here with the full support and confidence of our President Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

We are extremely pleased to be in attendance at this opening ceremony of ICT Experts meeting taking place here in Niamey, Niger. We are pleased because this is the first ECOWAS Meeting on ICT since Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia was elected as Chair of ECOWAS. While the intended outcome of this meeting will generally be good for ECOWAS member countries, it is equally true to conclude that it will particularly be strategic for Liberia as Chair of ECOWAS. Let me therefore take this time to thank all member countries of ECOWAS for their confidence reposed in us to provide leadership to the ECOWAS community regarding its programs and projects.

Fellow delegates and distinguished personalities, this meeting of Experts is critical for the advancement of the ECOWAS community. As ECOWAS member countries, we are intrinsically interdependent. While trade and other forms of globalization have made our interdependence even more indispensable, there are still some major gaps that weaken our interdependence. For example, inadequate cross border connectivity among us as ECOWAS members must be addressed. Essentially, addressing this level of infrastructure inadequacy will not only address our regional infrastructure needs on a broad level, it must necessarily address the need of landlocked countries that do not have access to undersea fiber cables. Affirmative action is needed to help us as a community to actualize these objectives and unlock our vast potential. While we encourage our experts to question assumptions that might be contained in the consultants' reports, we want our experts to do so in a manner that supports sustainable solutions.

With this background in mind, this meeting is significant in a number of ways. It provides us with the strategic framework and tools to address existing barriers and challenges among member states of ECOWAS and provides the shared platform on how we as a people can

collaborate, cooperate and collectively forge ahead by exerting more efforts in making ECOWAS more livable. We cannot afford to leave any member country behind. Our hope therefore is that every member country will demonstrate reasonable effort in helping ECOWAS to realize its objectives across its ICT and postal programs.

On behalf of the Government and people of Liberia, I now join other speakers in welcoming you to this ceremony, where all of us are expected to make substantive contributions to the deliberations. Once we, as experts, have vetted and amended as may be necessary, the report of the consultants, it follows that the Council of Ministers will adopt it for the good of ECOWAS and its people.

Thank you and you are welcome.