



REMARKS BY H.E. SELMA MALIKA HADDADI

**Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission
On the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Economic
Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
Lagos, Federal Republic of Nigeria – 28 May 2025**

It is with great humility and profound respect that I address you today on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Economic Community of West African States—ECOWAS. This momentous milestone marks fifty years of perseverance, purpose, and progress in our collective African journey.

His Excellency Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, deeply regrets not being able to join us in person today. He has, however, entrusted me with the honourable task of conveying his heartfelt congratulations to the leaders and peoples of West Africa, and to you, Mr. President, for the exceptional hospitality and leadership shown in hosting this historic celebration in the beating heart of Lagos.

Fifty years ago, ECOWAS emerged from the bold imagination of visionary leaders who understood, long before many, that Africa's strength would be forged not in fragmentation but in unity. They knew that our economic liberation could not be achieved in isolation, and that our sovereignty would only be meaningful if defended collectively.

Today, we gather not only to mark the passage of time, but to honour a vision—bold, ambitious, and enduring. The vision of a united West Africa, where borders yield to bonds of solidarity, and sovereignty is strengthened through shared purpose. That vision is embodied in the Economic Community of West African States—ECOWAS

Amid political challenges, pandemics, economic disruptions, and the shifting tides of globalization, ECOWAS has remained steadfast. Not without trials—but never without resolve. In the face of adversity, ECOWAS has not stood idle; it has acted decisively—as a guardian of peace and a builder of dialogue.

When internal conflicts threatened to tear nations apart, ECOWAS, through ECOMOG, did not merely intervene as a regional bloc—it rose as a moral force, defending human dignity and upholding the promise of peace. Its interventions have been shaped by conviction, not convenience.

Today, ECOWAS's role as a first responder to political crises has solidified its standing—not only as a cornerstone of West African stability—but as a vital pillar within the broader continental architecture. Its swift diplomatic actions, operational agility, and principled stance on governance have greatly enriched the African Union's capacity to respond to emergent threats.

In ECOWAS, Africa finds not just a regional organisation, but a credible voice—anchored in the values of unity, justice, and enduring peace

But peace, while precious, is not enough. What ECOWAS has achieved in economic integration is equally remarkable.

From the seamless mobility of people and goods to the implementation of a common external tariff, and from a unified biometric identity system to the harmonization of trade regulations within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area—ECOWAS has demonstrated what is possible when political will meets institutional courage.

Its alignment with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 is not only strategic, it is visionary. It signifies a deep understanding that integration is not an event, but a process—demanding both patience and precision, solidarity and sacrifice.

Yet, even as we celebrate, we must not lose sight of the sobering realities that define our present. We are living through a time of profound uncertainty—where the anchors of yesterday no longer guarantee stability today. Geopolitical tensions are escalating. Climate change is reshaping the contours of vulnerability across our region. Economic disparities are deepening, and in many societies, the social contract is under visible strain.

These are not minor hurdles. They are seismic challenges that test the very fabric of our institutions at all levels and the convictions of our leadership.

In such a climate, retreat may seem tempting. But history has shown us that the African spirit does not yield to despair—it rises. This is a time to double down on solidarity, to reaffirm the values that brought us here, and to chart the course for the next fifty years with boldness, clarity, and unity of purpose.

Let us be reminded that for the AU, REC’s are the corner stone and building blocs of African integration and ECOWAS has consistently led by example.

ECOWAS's journey is not only West Africa's legacy—it is Africa's mirror. It reflects our capacity to transcend colonial borders, to build consensus in diversity, and to craft solutions rooted in our own wisdom.

As we cast our eyes forward, let us envision a West African community that does not merely react to crises but foresees and forestalls them. A community driven not just by resilience, but by foresight. One where innovation fuels inclusive growth, and where women and youth are not peripheral stakeholders—but central architects of policy and progress.

Let us imagine a region where digital transformation becomes a tool for equity—not exclusion—bridging divides and unlocking the full potential of our people. Above all, let us reaffirm our unwavering belief in the African future—boldly, fiercely, and without apology.

We at the African Union remain committed to walking this path with you—not behind you, not in front of you, but beside you. For as long as ECOWAS thrives, Africa thrives. And when Africa thrives, we all move forward.

Let the next fifty years be defined not by the limitations of our time, but by the limitless possibilities of our collective will.

Thank you for your kind attention.