



ECOWAS COMMISSION
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EARLY WARNING DIRECTORATE (EWD)

Office of the Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission

PANEL on “Regional Response to Security Threats:
Early Warning and Early Response”

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ECOWAS' Key Challenges in Responding to Security Threats

The multi-faceted and multi-dimensional nature of threats require coordinated, long-term and resource intensive responses.

Insecurity is oftentimes triggered by Structural and Institutional factors that are hard to address quickly (socio-economic pressures, climate related pressures, community fragmentation etc.)

Sovereignty over supra-nationality:

- In the history of peace-keeping in Africa, ECOWAS was the first organization to engage in joint action with the UN for the resolution of conflicts within West Africa, indicating a relatively strong supra-national locus standi.
- Conversely, though ECOWAS has enshrined principles of convergences in terms of constitutional order, rule of law and human rights in its protocols, particularly in the 2001 Protocol relating to Democracy and Good Governance, yet the region has witnessed 3 coup's d'états recently.



Role of Early Warning in Managing Security Threats in the ECOWAS region

Enhance the anticipation, preparedness, and early response to threats to Security in the region

Specifically, the ECOWAS Early Warning System:

- Employs empirical data to conduct qualitative and quantitative analysis and assessments of threats to Security in the region
- Engages Civil Society for strategic partnership
- Develops scenarios related to identified threats to enable decision makers plan and take preventive or mitigating response measures
- Provides early warning alerts to low intensity conflicts to incite early response, thereby limiting the potential for escalation into full blown conflict.
- Proffers prevention or mitigation response options and recommendations.



Differences between Early Warning and Intelligence Systems

EARLY WARNING	INTELLIGENCE
Open source data	Data gathered also through covert means such as interception of communication etc.
Overt approach	Covert approach
People centric	State centric
Involvement of multiple non state actors, CSO's etc.	Restricted access, typically within state actors/Government agencies.
Generally most effective when information/alerts is widely disseminated	Most effective when information is restricted.



Closer relationship between RECs in Africa would lead to:

- Deeper and broader consultation and dialogue between the RECs/RMs for the strategic prioritization of policies and programs that build towards greater use of the signals from early warning in policy making and programmatic coordination and delivery of peace and stabilization initiatives in Africa
- promotion of information sharing and knowledge generation especially on cross-regional issues
- Knowledge sharing on best practices and lessons learnt



Leveraging the Early Warning Systems

Early Warning Systems can be leveraged by African Governments and Security Sector leaders in a number of ways including:

- Understanding the trends that portend for insecurity and humanitarian crisis
- Employing the empirical data emanating from Early Warning Systems to deploy well informed policies and initiatives.
- Strengthening national capacity for conflict prevention, by building the skills of, and developing closer collaboration among national actors to facilitate early response to challenges. In ECOWAS, we have established National Mechanisms for this purpose.



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Thank you
