

Ecowas Conflict Management and Peace-Keeping Initiatives in West Africa

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Abstract

The work examined the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) conflict management and peace-keeping initiatives in West Africa. The objective is to evaluate the interventions carried out in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau conflicts with a view to learning lessons and building on the achievements to strengthen the regional peace and security. The work observed that economic integration was the original mandate of ECOWAS. Threats to development, peace and security informed the ECOWAS decision to broaden its mandate to encompass conflict management. ECOWAS has established a commendable record in peace-keeping. Its intervention in Liberia brought the conflict to an end. In Sierra Leone, it provided the necessary support for the legitimate government and in Guinea Bissau, ECOWAS failed in its responsibility of stopping violence. For peace-keeping force to proceed, certain factors must exist; political will to act and political cohesion. There must be a clear mandate detailing the role and orientation of the force in the theatre of conflicts. All these were lacking during the ECOWAS interventions in these countries. Fortunately, these challenges have been addressed by ECOWAS mechanism for conflict prevention and management. Thus, conflict prevention as the main strategy for ECOWAS conflict management deserves to be given much more attention as it is cheaper in every respect than peace-keeping operations.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Conflict, Management, Peace-keeping, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was founded by a treaty. The aims and objectives of ECOWAS are to promote cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.¹ It is clear that main priority of ECOWAS as an inter-Governmental Organization was economic agenda. At the time, only a passing thought was given to the nexus between security and economic development because relationship between various countries was reasonably good and did not require signing a defence pact or defense agreement. Internal problems were easily contained within those respective countries.² However, in 1989, 1996 and 1998 complicated internal conflicts broke out in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau respectively. The massive humanitarian crises caused by these internal conflicts created serious security and refugee challenges in the sub-region as the conflicts generated a climate of instability, encouraged arms trafficking and proliferation of small arms and dangerously compromised economic development agenda. In the absence of response from the international community to massive violation of human rights in these countries, ECOWAS intervened on purely humanitarian ground. The ECOWAS interventions attracted so much controversy at various international fora and amongst its leadership. The existing legal instruments and protocols at ECOWAS disposal were designed to prevent conflicts between member states; nothing was in place for inference in the internal affairs of member states.³ Despite the severe criticisms of ECOWAS action, the ECOWAS interventions in these countries received broad support from international organizations, such as United Nations and European Economic Community.⁴

The work therefore examines past ECOWAS conflict management and peace-keeping initiatives in with Africa, focusing specifically on Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

2.0 GENESIS OF THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT

Liberia was founded in 1822 by repatriated freed black American slaves, was the first Republic in Africa to have her independence in 1847. From 1822 to the early part of 21st century, the settlers, known as the Americo-Liberians, engaged in many conflicts against the indigenous people of Liberia in an attempt to subjugate them to their rule and authority. The Americo-Liberians who were in the Minority controlled political and economic power in the country to the exclusion of the majority of the indigenes. Prior to 1946, there were separate laws for the indigenous people and Americo-Liberians who inhabited Monrovia and other coastal areas of the country, that is, Monsterrado.⁵

On April 12, 1980, non-commissioned officers in the Liberian Army seized power and that ended the 133 years of Americo-Liberian, domination of the politics of that country. Liberia for the first time since 1847 had an indigenous son as its Head of State in the person of Master Sergeant Samuel Doe. Doe read out a litany of grievances which the majority of the people had against the deposed Americo-Liberian oligarchy to wit that:⁶

There had been an incomparable corruption in the form of conflict of interest. The selling of influence, the use of official positions for private gain, and other forms of corruption. There were illegal seizures and even conviction without trial, the unemployment situation was so bad that there were more people looking for work than employed, the cost of food is high and most of the people cannot afford \$40 to buy a bag of rice. The health situation is so terrible that nearly one out of every five newly born babies dies before reaching the age of one.

Despite these observations, Doe's administration did not fare any better. For example, in an attempt to consolidate his grip on power in the country, virtually all sensitive positions in his government were given to people from his ethnic group; the khrams and with time, the regime assumed an embracing ethnic colour to the dislike of other ethnic groups who formed the majority.

This was followed by massive and blatant violations of human rights in almost every nook and corner of the country. There was wide spread corruption and mismanagement of the economy. In a nutshell, Doe's regime was accused of the misuse of state resource alongside an arrogant contempt for minimal standards of human rights, state terror, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture, secret and public executions and the willful destruction of private property, wrongful dismissals, wanton raiding and raping, systematically organized to thoroughly intimidate the populace.⁷

These accusations led to increasing opposition to his corrupt, autocratic and ethnic centered regime. Following the adoption of a new Constitution in 1984, a date was fixed in October, 1985 for presidential elections and Doe announced his intention to contest and formed the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL). There was harassment of opposition leaders in the country by Doe's men with the intention of preventing them from either contesting the elections or registering their political association as political parties. For example, Dr. Amos Sawyer was arrested and detained on the order of Doe on the spurious allegation of his advocacy of ideologies alien to Liberia, and his party, Liberian Peoples Party (LPP) was banned.⁸

Elections were organized and as expected, Doe won the elections and became Liberian President with a six year mandate. As a result of the rigged elections and criticisms of the manner in which Doe came to power, Thomas Quiwonkpa, then, Commander of the Armed Forces of Liberia, on 12th November, 1985 attempted a coup d'état to overthrow Doe. The coup failed and he was captured and executed on the orders of Doe. There were mass killings of the Gio's and the Manos, believed to be supporters of Thomas Quiwonkpa. About 3,000 people were killed in reprisal attack carried out by the security forces of Doe.⁹

The failure of the coup led to the flight of Charles Taylor, a close associate of Quiwonkpa to Cote D'Ivoire. Whilst there, he recruited young Liberians mainly from Nimba County and on 24th December, 1989 launched an attack against security posts in Nimba County. There after, Taylor was in control of about 75% of the country and Doe was compelled to retreat to the Executive Mansion, his official residence for months until his unexpected capture and execution by the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Prince Yomie Johnson. Liberia was in a state of anarchy in which bloodshed and destruction raged unabated and the international community could do nothing to halt the genocide. The war also resulted in the destabilization of neighboring states as a result of the spillover of about 750,000 refugees across Liberian borders.¹⁰

2.1 ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT

ECOWAS is primarily an economic organization. However, the situation in Liberia presented a grave threat to the stability of West Africa, and member states could not tolerate the kidnapping and killing of foreign nationals. The civil war caused a massive outflow of refugees into neighboring countries, which in turn presented an overwhelmed burden on these states and threatened their own security. An additional consideration, which was not voiced at the time but was discoursed in close diplomatic circles was the apparent discovery of a plan by Libyan trained rebel groups, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to take over the sub-region by toppling sitting regimes through armed rebellions.¹¹

By May, 1990, the Liberian crisis had degenerated into unspeakable tragedy as many people had been killed. The Liberia Council of Churches, Muslim leaders and other influential Liberians asked the United Nations and the United States to intervene. But no body was willing to intervene. The organization of African Unity (OAU) referred to its non-interference clause in the internal affairs of member states. The then Secretary-General of United Nations (UN), Javier Perez de Cuellar, did not mince words in saying that UN would not intervene and United States bluntly refused to move in and separate the warring factions.¹²

All appeals from ECOWAS and other international organizations for the warring factions to halt the killings went unheeded. It was against this background that the 13th Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS convened in Banjul, The Gambia, from 28-30th May, 1990 under the Chairmanship of Blaise Comptore of Burkina Faso. It was at that occasion that former President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria proposed the setting up of a Community Standing Mediation Committee thus:¹³

"Permit me at this juncture to remind us all of the basic principles which formed

the foundation stone of our organization. The noble ideals of ECOWAS were anchored on solidarity, unity, mutual trust and good neighborliness. We should always uphold these principal ingredients in our dealings with one another. These attributes imposed on us an obligation to adopt a conciliatory posture in inter-state affairs even in conflictive situations. May I, in this regard urge us all to please always exercise great restraint and always allow wise counsel to prevail. We can ill afford at this time to dissipate vital energy on inter-state squabbles. In view of the occasional clashes resulting from political misunderstanding among some of our member states, I propose that this summit should set up a Standing Mediation Committee of four members including the country that holds the Chairmanship of the Authority. Such a Committee should intervene in timely fashion, whenever such disputes arise. The membership of the committee could be reviewed every three years."

In deciding to establish a Community Standing Mediation Committee, the Authority stated that it was convinced that "regional security and stability, as well as peace and concord are necessary conditions for effective sub-regional cooperation and integration", and that it was fully aware of "the disruptive effect that recurrent situations of conflict and dispute among member states have on the ultimate ECOWAS goal of a harmonious and united West African society."¹⁴ The Mediation Committee was charged with mediatory role between all the factions. The first meeting of the Committee was held in Banjul, Gambia, from 6-7th August, 1990 under the Chairmanship of Sir Dawda Jawara. On the 7th August, 1990, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) Standing Mediation Committee established an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia to halt the "Wanton destruction of human life and property and... massive damage... being caused by the armed conflict to the stability and survival of the entire Liberian nation".¹⁵ ECOMOG was mandated to restore law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections. The committee also convened a Conference of all political parties and other interest groups for the purpose of establishing a broad-based interim Government. To ensure the impartiality of the interim government, it was agreed that none of the leaders of the warring factions could head the interim government and the Head of the interim government will not be eligible to run for the Presidential elections to be conducted later.¹⁶

Both Samuel Doe and Yormie Johnson commended the decisions of the Mediation Committee and were willing to abide by it, unfortunately, Charles Taylor turned down all the peaceful proposals of the Committee. Thus, the stalemate continued. On 30th August 1990, ECOWAS convened another meeting in Banjul Gambia. Other factions attended but Charles Taylor stayed away. At this meeting Dr. Amos Sawyer, leader of Liberian People Party (LPP) was elected President of the interim government of National Unity and Bishop Ronald Diggs, appointed interim Vice-President¹⁷. In his capacity as the interim President, Dr. Sawyer proposed a settlement of the conflict in the following manner: an interim legislative assembly would be set up in which Charles Taylor's NPFL would be offered six seats and Yormie Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPEL)-4 seats, Taylor again rejected this proposal and insisted on being the President of Liberia. The United States of America Government mediated negotiations led to the formal declaration of a ceasefire; the terms of which were also violated by Charles Taylor.¹⁸

Despite these efforts to return peace to Liberia, war continued unabated. By the end of August, 1990, it became obvious that forceful involvement was needed to physically dislodge the warring factions. Accordingly, ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee took the decision to dispatch ECOMOG to Liberia to enforce a ceasefire. At that historic session, attended by five heads of states¹⁹ and senior representatives from Mali and Togo, the Mediation Committee carefully analyzed the Liberian situation thus:²⁰

The failure of the warring parties to cease hostilities has led to the massive destruction of property and massacre by all the parties of thousands of innocent civilians, including foreign nationals, women and children, some of whom had sought sanctuary in churches, hospitals, diplomatic missions and under Red Cross protection, contrary to all recognized standards of civilized behaviour. Worse still, there are corpses lying unburied in the streets of cities and towns, which could lead to an epidemic. The civil war has also trapped thousands of foreign nationals, including ECOWAS citizens, without any means of escape or protection. The result of all this is a state of anarchy and the total breakdown of law and order in Liberia. Presently, there is a government in Liberia which cannot govern and contending factions which are holding the entire population as hostage, depriving them of food, health facilities and other basic necessities of life. These developments have traumatized the Liberian population and greatly shocked the people of the sub-region and the rest of the international community. They have also led to hundreds of thousands of Liberians being displaced and made refugees in neighboring countries, and the spilling of hostilities into neighboring countries. It is against this background that the Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS Mediation Committee met in Banjul from 6th to 7th August, 1990 where they decided to assume their responsibility of ensuring that peace and stability is

maintained within the sub-region and in the African continent as a whole for they believed that the tragic situation in Liberia poses a threat to international peace and security.²¹

3.0 ECOWAS PEACE INITIATIVES IN LIBERIAN CONFLICT

(a). THE BAMAKOSUMMIT: NOVEMBER, 27 – 28 – 1990

The first extra-ordinary summit of ECOWAS opened in Bamako, Mali from November 27-28, 1990.²²The meeting was well attended by the Authority of ECOWAS. The Bamako summit resolved two major challenges; first, it resolved the crisis between the Anglo-phone and Franco-phone members over matters of procedure, principles and composition of ECOWAS. The Franco-phone nations saw the imposition of ceasefire on warring factions an interventionist action by the ECOMOG which was dominated by troops from Anglophone members. Secondly, the summit ended the war between ECOMOG and the warring factions which signed a ceasefire and agreed to negotiate the modalities of implementing ceasefire and agreed that, ECOMOG should monitor it. The three leaders of warring factions in Liberia endorsed the agreement on cessation of hostilities and peaceful settlement of conflict. Unfortunately, renewed clashes began between the warring factions as some of them gave various and conflicting interpretations to the Bamako agreement.

(b). THE LOME SUMMIT OF ECOWAS STANDING MEDIATION COMMITTEE: FEBRUARY 12-13,1991

The Bamako Peace proposal ended in fiasco because of the continuous mistrust that existed amongst the armed groups on the one hand and between ECOMOG and the factions on the other hand. As a result, another summit of ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee was held in Lome, Togo, from February 12-13, 1991, to get the warring factions go along the peace line. The warring factions signed a ceasefire agreement, and the formation of an interim administration under the leadership of Dr. Amos Sawyer. In the Lome Agreement, the armed factions reiterated to bring all hostilities to a stop and to refrain from the importation and acquisition of arms or other war materials. All the leaders of the conflicting parties agreed unreservedly to confine their troops to positions to be determined by the intervention force in consultation with the factions. The various factions were also to assist ECOMOG draw up a buffer zone to separate them²³.

The meeting was a unique Forum for the leaders (Dr. Sawyer, Mr. Taylor and Johnson) to reconcile with one another and to engage in a friendly dialogue amongst themselves with a view to advancing the search for a peaceful and lasting settlement of the Liberian crisis with particular regard to the arrangement for convening of National Conference in Monrovia on March 15, 1991.

(c). ALL - LIBERIA CONFERENCE MARCH 15, 1991:

The Lome summit and agreements brought relative calm to allow for the much talked about All-Liberia conference to take place on March 15, 1991 under the triumvirate Chairmanship of Ambassador H. Brewer, Archbishop MK. Francis and Sheikh K.K. Konneh.²⁴The purpose of the national conference was to find a peaceful means of ending the unfortunate situation in Liberia through the formation of an interim government acceptable to the Liberian people. The NPFL submitted proposals to the conference but later walked out of the meeting after refusing to agree on several issues both of substance and of procedure.²⁵ This setback by the NPFL did not however stop the conference from forming an interim government known as the Interim Government of National Unity led by Professor Amos Sawyer as the President and Peter Naigow as the Vice-President.²⁶

A Unicameral Interim Legislative Assembly made up of 51 members was also established with 26 members from 13 counties, 13 representatives from the Assembly in Gbarga and 13 representatives from the Assembly in Monrovia, five members came from the NPFL and one member from the INPFL, while two members were from the interest groups and six from the two existing political parties.²⁷Prior to the National Conference, a joint declaration on the Liberian situation was held on the March 1, 1991, at the invitation of the Togolese President GnassingbeEyadema, in which the warring parties agreed to co-operate fully with ECOWAS and to refrain from taking any action that might be prejudicial to the arrangements 'being made to ensure the successful convening of the All-Liberia National Conference'.²⁸ Soon after the National Conference, clashes continued to occur between the rebel groups. Another meeting was convened in Yamoussoukro in June 1991, at the invitation of President Felix HouphouetBoigny of Cote d'Ivoire because, "war appears to be defying all efforts to bring sanity to the place and at every crucial turn, it has been Mr. Taylor frivolously throwing a spanner into the peace works."²⁹

(d). CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE IN YAMO USSOUKRO-YAMO USSOUKRO I: JUNE 29 to 30, 1991:

Between of June 29 - 30, 1991, a meeting was convened under the Chairmanship of President Felix HouphouetBoigny in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast. In attendance were the warring factions as well as General Ibrahim Babangida (Nigeria), President DawdaJawara (Gambia) and ECOWAS Chairman President

GnassingbeEyadema (Togo), President Blaise Compaore (Burkina Faso), President Amos Sawyer (Interim Government of Liberia) and Mr. Charles Taylor, (Head of NPFL). The Heads of State present at the meeting requested President Boigny to launch an urgent appeal to both Sawyer and Charles Taylor to accept 'a cease-fire, as preliminary national reconciliation and restoration of peace to the war-torn country. The proposals made included the maintenance of security in each of the zones under their control until elections were conducted.³⁰

(e). THE 14TH SUMMIT OF ECOWAS HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT, ABUJA, JULY 4 - 6, 1991:

Few days after the Yarmoussoukro agreement, the 14th ECOWAS summit was held in Abuja, Nigeria. During the session, an extensive review of the Liberian situation was made, while the communiqué released at the end of the summit enjoined the five member committee to ensure that a proper atmosphere conducive to the conduct of free and fair election was established in Liberia before the election. The summit also re-affirmed the need for other ECOWAS member states to contribute troops in strengthening the capacity of ECOMOG to overcome the Liberian problem.³¹

(f). FIRST YAMOOUSSOUKRO SUMMIT OF THE COMMITTEE OF FIVE -YAMOOUSSOUKRO II:

This summit took place on July 29, 1991 following the endorsement by members at the Abuja summit. The Cote d'Ivoire President again chaired the meeting. Others present included the Heads of State of The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal, a representative of President Eyadema of Togo, Professor Amos Sawyer, Taylor and the representative of International Negotiations Network (INN). After reviewing the Liberian situation, commendation was made to former president of United States, Jimmy Carter, for responding to the invitation and for making the INN assist in organizing electoral process in Liberia.³²

(g). SECOND MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF FIVE - SEPTEMBER 16-17, 1991-YAMOOUSSOUKRO:

As agreed during the Yamoussoukro II meeting, another meeting was convened again under the same Chairmanship of President Boigny. It was maintained at the meeting that ECOMOG should be remodelled and reinforced. Similarly, the warring factions agreed for the disarming and encampment of their troops in designated locations and to get the arms and ammunitions deposited in appropriate armories under the purview of ECOMOG. Both the Interim government of Liberia and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia agreed to set up a five member election Commission for the organization and supervision of elections in Liberia; establish a five member Ad hoc Supreme Court to adjudicate disputes arising from the electoral process as provided by the Liberian Constitution; and to co-operate fully with the International Negotiations Network of the Carter Centre invited by the Committee to assist with the electoral process.³³

(h). THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF FIVE, OCTOBER 29-30, 1991, YAMOOUSSOUKRO IV:

As agreed in the previous meeting, the committee of five met again, with other members of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, Guinea and Sierra-Leone in attendance. Others invited to the meeting were Salim A. Salim, then Secretary- General of O.A.U. and Mrs. Dayle Spencer of the International Negotiations Network. A review of developments relating to the Liberian situation was made. The parties were urged to speed up preparations for the commencement of the Interim Election Commission and the disarming and encampment of combatants. Other agreements reached include:³⁴

- (a) ECOMOG now to cover the whole of Liberia, as ECOMOG troops have to be deployed all over the country for the supervision of the encampment and disarming of all warring factions.
- (b) ECOMOG shall enjoy freedom of movement throughout Liberia.
- (c) All warring factions will voluntarily abandon their fighting locations and move into designated camps.
- (d) Eminent persons of the International Negotiations Network will visit Liberia during encampment and disarmament to reinforce the confidence of warring factions.
- (e) All parties will recognize the absolute neutrality of ECOMOG and demonstrate trust and confidence in it.

ECOMOG was given certain tasks which will enhance the smooth encampment and disarming of the warring factions. These include among other things, the elimination of external threat to allow the encampment and disarmament to be effectively done; monitoring of all avenues of approach to Liberia by patrols and static guard; search to recover hidden or lost weapons; stationing static guards in strategic installations and providing security for all VIPs and where necessary, for local dignitaries. However, these anticipated developments did not all happen because of obstacles created by Charles Taylor for ECOMOG. Instead of working for the

implementation of the agreement, Taylor recruited 5,000 men to boost his army that was supposed to be disarmed by January, 1992.³⁵

Several attempts were made to ensure that Taylor heeded to the agreement signed in Yamoussoukro, but to no avail. For instance, the Interim Government of Sawyer imposed economic sanctions against the NPFL and its controlled territory in December 1991 because, "... (Sawyer) had seen the peace process stalled by the NPFL and watched that body built up a vast arsenal mainly to ensure that the pillage continues".³⁶ Similarly, people in Liberia had expressed their dissatisfaction with the delay in the implementation of the peace accord. Taylor on the other hand refused to commence the process of the implementation until United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) had withdrawn into Sierra Leone. Finally, in February 1992, Sawyer offered the post of Vice-President to Taylor on condition that the NPFL disarmed and encamped within the stipulated period. Several cabinet and legislative positions were also offered to top NPFL members. Yet the efforts yielded no fruitful results. Hence, the Informal Consultative Group of Committee of Five decided to meet again to further the peace process.³⁷

(i). INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING APRIL 6-7, 1992:

Five months after the Yamoussoukro rounds, an Informal Consultative Group meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland at the invitation and under the Chairmanship of President Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire. Present at the meeting were Heads of State of Senegal, Burkina Faso and Amos Sawyer, Taylor and the Vice President of Nigeria who represented the Nigerian president. It was observed during the meeting that positive developments were recorded amidst the stalemate created by the NPFL - which include the appointment of the members of the Interim Election Commission, the ad hoc Supreme Court, the completion of reconnaissance visits by ECOMOG to the areas held by the NPFL and the opening of some of the trunk roads in Liberia. At the end of the day, it was noted that several aspects of the Yamoussoukro accord had not been implemented, particularly those relating to the establishment of a buffer zone along the Sierra-Leone — Liberia border and the encampment and disarmament of all combatants. It was however resolved that the encampment and disarmament of all combatants shall be carried out by ECOMOG as envisioned in the Yamoussoukro Accord, and Mr. Charles Taylor may maintain a personal security of company strength equipped only with small arms.³⁸

(j). 15th SUMMIT of ECOWAS, JULY 27-29, 1992:

As with previous ECOWAS session, the Liberian crisis was given top priority at the 15th summit of ECOWAS. It noted with disappointment the uncooperative attitude of the NPFL in foiling any peace agreement reached especially in the area of disarmament and encampment of its combatants and the insertion of buffer zone along the Liberia — Sierra-Leone border.³⁹ The summit, therefore, resolved that: The Field Commander of ECOMOG shall complete the implementation of the programme contained in the Yamoussoukro Accord of October 30, 1991, clarified by the Geneva meeting of the Committee of Five, not later than thirty days from July 29, 1992. That unless Charles Taylor and the NPFL comply fully with the implementation of the said programme, the Authority shall impose comprehensive sanctions against Charles Taylor and the NPFL-controlled areas of Liberia and other party(ies) that fail to comply with the implementation of the programme. That all the member states of ECOWAS shall take all necessary measures to give full effect to this decision. That the Committee of Five, in consultation with the Standing Mediation Committee, shall seek the assistance of the Security Council of the United Nations to make whatever sanctions that are imposed effective and binding on all members of the international community in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

Following the 30 day ultimatum which expired in August 1992, given to Taylor to heed to the Yamoussoukro Accord, an economic embargo was imposed by ECOWAS to starve the NPFL of arms. Consequently, ECOMOG was able to liberate 20 towns and villages under the control of the NPFL which include towns of Buchanan, Kakata, Herbel and the strategic Roberts Field International Airport. Similarly, Gbenga, the headquarters of the NPFL was "mistakenly" bombed by ECOMOG troops.⁴⁰ The fall of Kakata only instigated Taylor rather than mollify him. He stated in a radio broadcast of the BBC that "we may suffer some setbacks but we will continue to fight this war, this year, next and the next 10 years. ECOMOG will gain no military victory because if peace is forged without Taylor's input, the fighting will recur".⁴¹

(k). THE COTONOU AGREEMENT JULY 25-26, 1993:

The signing of the Cotonou agreement took place in Benin, a month after more than 500 civilians were killed in the general Harbel area 64 kilometers from Monrovia. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia was accused of committing the massacre because a radio message was intercepted in which Charles Taylor was heard saying, "if you have men among them, chop them and for the women, rape them all I want now is a reign of terror..." Whole villages and displaced centers were set ablaze shortly after hearing this intercepted message.⁴² During the Cotonou meeting, it was agreed that ECOMOG troops together with Zimbabwean and Tanzanian troops will work jointly in disarming the warring factions. The Accord also gave the NPFL the right to nominate members

to a number of cabinet posts in the new Liberian National Transitional Government. The peace accord was however threatened in August that year when the Interim President, Amos Sawyer, sacked Ma Kayon, the elected Chairman of the reconstituted transitional government which was formed during the Cotonou meeting.⁴³

By November 1993, about 300 United Nations Observers arrived in Liberia to supervise the disarmament process as requested by Charles Taylor. Zimbabwe and Tanzania sent a reconnaissance team two months later.⁴⁴ Zimbabwe had earlier threatened not to commit its troops unless the United Nations was ready to write off the entire cost of its peace keeping operation which the United Nations conceded. Following this development, the Nigerian government further reiterated its commitment to see to the end of the Liberian fracas. This went counter to earlier announcement by the Nigerian Interim Head of State, Shonekan (August 27 — November, 1993) to withdraw Nigerian troops from ECOMOG by March 1994 due to economic reasons.⁴⁵

The Abacha government that took over in November 1993 argued that:⁴⁶

“it will be a great disaster if at this stage of development in Liberia, we should pull out without realizing the sacrifice in terms of men and materials which we have put in... while it was not Nigeria’s desire to keep the troops in Liberia a day longer than necessary, it is not neat to just pull out without bringing... the peace process which was initiated by ECOMOG (in) which Nigeria played a substantial role, to a logical conclusion”

With this renewed effort by Nigeria, Taylor also agreed for the disarming of his troops and urged other warring factions to do the same. Similarly, by March 1994, some war-weary combatants from the ULIMO faction handed over their arms to the ECOMOG encampment site at Todee after the attack on Kakata by ULIMO in which lorries carrying 250 tonnes of food items meant for refugees were hijacked.⁴⁷ The request by Charles Taylor that the new Liberian National Transitional Government be installed first before disarmament takes place finally agreed upon in March following the meeting between Amos Sawyer and the warring groups. Charles Taylor’s opponent still harboured the suspicion against his motive. It was not surprising, therefore, that shortly after the meeting the struggle to maintain power in the LNTG came to the fore.

Taylor wanted his NPFL to have their ministers in Agriculture, Lands and Mines Ministry in order to control the resources of the nation, as well as the Labour and International Affairs Ministry so as to control and manipulate the political appointees in the various subdivisions of the nation and to control the dissemination of information in which government policies will be presented to the world. The United Liberation Movement of Liberia on the other hand wanted to control the economic heights of the government apparatus. ULIMO has also shown the desire to control the Defence and Finance Ministries and also put forward names of candidates to fill the posts of Chief Executive of key corporations such as Liberian Telecommunications and the National Bank of Liberia.⁴⁸ Thus, from the pattern of distribution, the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was alienated and treated as the faction rather than a legitimate party, because most sensitive posts were denied it. Already, ULIMO had taken charge in the Ministries of Commerce, Public Works and Health and are bidding to get the Finance Ministry. But the Defence portfolio was vehemently objected to by the other parties. The Justice Ministry later came under the NPFL (i.e., the Minister of Justice was nominated from the NPFL).⁴⁹

ULIMO had also taken over the Ministry of State which is the heart and soul of the Executive Presidency in spite of the fact that they had been reluctant to comply fully with disarmament.⁵⁰ The IGNU was given portfolios in Posts and Telecommunications and Education Ministries. Though these are vital ministries their importance was greatly reduced in a government made up of hostile partners where the complementary portfolios were held by groups which had shown no inclination to cooperate effectively with the IGNU nominees, except in areas of convenience.

In April 1994, a month after disarmament had started only 1,447 fighters had surrendered their arms out of 60,000 estimated by the United Nations.⁵¹ That slow pace of the disarmament process made the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) to be influential only in Monrovia; the combatants had to be disarmed and demobilized for the Liberian National Transitional Government to survive. In fact, another fighting broke out between ULIMO faction under Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson’s faction, a break away group from ULIMO; and also between the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) and NPFL. But then, by October the same year, ECOMOG troops were reduced to cut logistics cost. Akinola, ECOMOG spokesman also called on the international community to “review its role... in the Liberian peace process especially in the area of logistics requirement, to enable ECOMOG carry out its mandate successfully.”⁵²

(I). THE AKOSOMBO AGREEMENT – DECEMBER 21, 1994:

Another attempt to find a lasting solution to the crisis was made by Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, who was then the ECOWAS Chairman. The warring factions agreed for the establishment of the Council of State which was a collective presidency that will run the country until elections were held in November 1995.⁵³ The meeting was

adjourned to December 28 and January 11 but it finally ended in a deadlock three days later before it was reconvened on January 23, 1995. However, by early February, the peace accord collapsed when the disagreement arose among the warring parties on who should head the six-man Council of State.⁵⁴ Right from the onset, the meeting had to cross several hurdles.

In the first instance, the issue of the number of the Council members became a crucial one. While some did not want it to be less than four; others wanted it to be extended to six. For example; Bowen of the Armed Forces of Liberia wanted the Council to have five and even six members and the traditional rulers to be included because it would be to his advantage. On the other hand, the choice of a Chairman of the Council was the most contentious and intractable issue which finally became the waterloo of the Accra peace talks. Everybody wanted to be Chairman, particularly, Charles Taylor.⁵⁵ Ghana bemoaned this failure of the peace talks describing it as very frustrating and disappointing. "We had thought their personal ambition will be subordinated to the overall interest of Liberia."⁵⁶ With the failure of the Accra meeting, ULIMO forces once again encroached into Nimba County. Similarly, the Liberian Peace Council fought the NPFL over the control of Grand Bassa county to drive out Taylor and his NPFL. Kromah argued that he entered Nimba county in order to "to stop Taylor from violating the cease- fire", but Taylor countered, claiming that his army, "is too big a meat for Alhaji Kromah to chew" and vowed to stay in his capital to fight back.⁵⁷

Similarly, in April 1996, ECOMOG had to intervene and drive out troops of ULIMO faction when fighting between Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson rebel group prevented relief materials from reaching the people of Turbman-burg. Armed robbery was also reported to be on the increase. ULIMO was also reported to have killed 62 people in Tosi.⁵⁸ With all those developments, peace continued to elude Liberia. However, in June 1996, Taylor held talks with Nigerian Head of State, General Sani Abacha to discuss issues relating to disarmament of his troops and finding a lasting peace and to uphold the Cotonou Accord which had already worked out a gradual programme for election in Liberia and of course, the final withdrawal of all the forces contributed by participating nations. Thus, the main concern of ECOMOG, according to Nigeria's military spokesman, Brigadier-General Fred Chijuka, was "to disarm the warring factions to ensure a workability of the cease-fire agreement they signed. When that is done, it will be easy for participating countries to withdraw their troops."⁵⁹

(m). ABUJA ACCORD AUGUST 20, 1995

After all efforts made to restore peace to Liberia failed, the ECOWAS chairman, President Rawlings of Ghana had to back out for President Sani Abacha of Nigeria to handle the peace process. In a bid to find an amicable peace settlement in Liberia, President Abacha invited Charles Taylor to Nigeria in June 1995 for a rapprochement. When Taylor got to Nigeria, he was given a warm reception by the Nigerian President and they both exchanged apologies for past misunderstanding. They also took steps for reconciliation. After the meeting with Charles Taylor, a general meeting of all the leaders of the warring parties, ECOWAS members, representatives from OAU, INN and a host of others took place in Abuja, Nigeria's capital in August 1995, where another peace agreement was signed. Under the agreement, a mandatory cease-fire would take off on August 26, 1995, and a Council of State comprising an independent Chairman and five Vice Chairmen with equal status would become operational from September 2, 1995.⁶⁰

Tamba Kongoh was picked as the Chairman. The Council was established by the Cotonou Agreement which also established that of the second Vice Chairman but the other factions agreed to jettison that part of the accord and suggested that a neutral person be chosen and the Vice Chairman should have equal status. That went well with the group of nine. In the long run, San .Kawolo, a Kpeller from Liberia's largest ethnic group, was elected Chairman of the Council of State. All the five others were to be Vice Chairmen with equal status. They were: Taylor, G.Y. Kromah, George Boley and Oscar Quiah. Former chairman, 90-year old Kongoh, was the only member to represent civilians of Greater Liberia. Also under the agreement, factional leaders and members of the council wishing to contest elections would be represented by civilian members. The chairman was to be ineligible for elective office in the first presidential and legislative elections. Ministerial and statutory posts were to be shared among the factions as enshrined in the Cotonou Accord. The Council of State's Lifespan was twelve calendar months.⁶¹

However, Bonecult Johnson, a leader of the breakaway faction of ULIMO did not sign the agreement because a proposal sent to the facilitators to make Hezekiah Bowen, a General and Commander of the Armed Forces of Liberia, the Chief of Staff was rejected. In place of the proposal, Bowen was offered a ministerial portfolio which was not named. Bowen refused to take it. The Akosomboh Agreement which had made Bowen head of army meant he would be responsible for restructuring of the army. Other leaders, however, did not agree with Johnson and Bowen on this issue. Mr. Boley leader of the Liberian Peace Council had argued that "I am a commissioned officer of the Liberian Army and a Major. I tell you Bowen is not the only competent soldier in the A.F.L.", insisting that Bowen had been adequately protected by the Abuja Agreement and that his ministerial position could not be determined except with the consent of the ECOWAS Committee of Nine.⁶²

Despite Bowen's objection, representative of ECOWAS who brokered the Peace Agreement said it was

binding on all parties. However, Taylor had argued that the facilitators should look for a majority vote and not an endorsement by all parties, “total consensus is not even a feature of democracy” — said Taylor.⁶³ The Abuja Agreement was described as the most comprehensive in that it incorporated the Akosomboh and Cotonou Accords and the inputs of the five factional leaders who met before the full conference started.

Commenting on the Agreement signed, Ghana’s Foreign Minister had said that “everyone is tired of war, and everyone is tired of talking. This Agreement is an Agreement whose time has come”.⁶⁴ Nigerian’s Foreign Minister, Tom Ikimi, had also urged the two parties yet to sign the agreement to reconsider their stand because “Liberia is greater than any individual”. Canaan Banana, representative of the OAU’s Eminent Group, had this to say: “Agreement on Liberia are not in short supply, what is in short supply is the determination and commitment to implement them. We hope that this would be the last meeting and the next one would be to celebrate a new government and a democratic parliament”.⁶⁵ Accordingly, presidential election was held on the 19th July, 1997. Charles Taylor of the NPFL scored the highest number of valid votes and was declared the president of Liberia.

3.1 CHALLENGES OF ECOMOG IN LIBERIA

The most embarrassing challenge the ECOMOG had was the abduction of Samuel Doe by the forces of Yormie Johnson from the premises of ECOMOG Headquarters in Monrovia and was brutally executed. His execution impacted negatively on the perception of ECOMOG and destroyed the credibility of ECOMOG as a restraining force in a conflict situation. It invited criticisms about the capacity of the force to separate warring parties and guarantee security.⁶⁶

The force was confronted with certain defects in planning at the initial stage of the operations. The Force Commander, who took over from General Quainoo of Ghana, Major-General Joshua Dogonyaro of Nigeria, noted:⁶⁷

“But we have to be truthful here, that to put up a force together..., you need planning. So definitely we had problems at the start of the operation. You need good intelligence of where you are going to operate. That was definitely lacking. And to get good intelligence, you need very good maps and (we) found that these were not just available... these lessons we must document for the future to see the weaknesses and how they can be corrected.”

Furthermore, the ECOMOG Peace-keepers were deployed to Liberia before detailed logistical and financial arrangements were made. Thus, the peacekeeper was ill-equipped and ill-prepared, and there were cases of corruption, fraud, non-payment of allowances and neglect of troop welfare in the frontlines. In addition, the weaker states in the West African region had difficulty mobilizing the resources required to deal decisively with the Liberian crisis, becoming overwhelmingly dependent upon one regional power to sustain the operation. The ECOMOG operation occurred at a difficult time for the states in the region, when they themselves were involved in painful economic reforms and their own legitimacy, in most cases, was subject to internal criticism and pressure. The intervention was also complicated by linguistic and geographical rivalries and by cleavages within ECOWAS itself, and undermined by debilitating arguments about its legitimacy and organization.⁶⁸

The challenges were partially due to the fact that ECOWAS and its member-countries like the OAU had been notoriously slow to take issue of regional security seriously. Long standing mutual security Protocols that should have allowed ECOWAS to anticipate crises were not implemented. The apparent lack of unity among ECOWAS member states made the ECOWAS peace-keeping efforts rather problematic at the earliest stages as some ECOWAS member states had openly facilitated the rebellion in Liberia. For instance, Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire provided base facilities, logistical support and passage to Charles Taylor’s NPFL, while Libya provided arms and ammunition as well as training facilities. Both countries also played key roles in keeping the Liberian crisis off the UN Security Council agenda for sometime.⁶⁹ In addition, ECOMOG Peace-keepers turned into another party to the conflict as a result of the hostility of the rebel leader, Taylor, who saw the ECOWAS intervention as a ploy to deny him victory and to save Doe. He fought the ECOMOG troops and killed many of them. He also refused to be party to efforts aimed at arriving at a framework for peace acceptable to all the parties.

Furthermore, the nature of mandate given to ECOMOG was vague and this accounted for the initial opposition to the deployment of the force in Liberia. The peace plan of ECOWAS Mediation Committee called for “the establishment of an ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to monitor the ceasefire, restore law and order so as to create the necessary environment for peace and fair elections”.⁷⁰ As the mandate had not been clear and specific with respect to the operational role of ECOMOG, the force oscillated between performing traditional peace-keeping functions and engaging the warring factions in combat in attempts to enforce peace. The duality of roles itself generated differences between the Francophone who were in favour of moderate measures and the Anglophone states, like Nigeria, who supported more forceful and aggressive

approach to containing the conflict. There were the problems of neutrality of the force. The principle of neutrality assumes the adherence of a peace-keeping force to two cardinal principles. First, is the non-involvement of personnel from any of the warring parties and second, is preventing the preponderance of troops from coming from a specific country in the event of which the force may be perceived as an instrument of such a state. The establishment of ECOMOG displayed a consideration for the former tenet, but definitely not the later. For the reasons that reflect the weakness and lack of resources at the disposal of most member states, Nigeria and to some extent, Ghana were the largest contributors of troops, material and finance to ECOMOG.

The greatest impediment to the eventual success of ECOMOG in Liberia crisis was the disposition of the primary disputants. The inability of ECOMOG to resolve the Liberian crisis within a short period of time was largely a consequence of the belligerence of the warring groups towards ECOMOG. The unyielding pursuit of their partisan objectives and refusal to give the respective peace agreements a chance to work. For these reasons, ECOMOG became embroiled in a conflict that lasted for eight years. The central role played by Nigeria, a country whose terrible human rights record under General Abacha attracted international condemnation and sanctions also hurt ECOMOG's ability to attract much needed international support.⁷¹

In spite of these challenges and their attendant effects on the numerous un-sustained peace agreements, ECOMOG succeeded in lowering the threshold of violence, facilitated the evacuation of refugees and civilians and the establishment of interim government as recommended by the Banjul ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee. ECOMOG also facilitated an internationally acclaimed free and fair election which enthroned Mr. Charles Taylor as the President of Liberia in 1997. The ability of the organization to shift the mandate of its forces from peace-keeping to peace enforcement and peacemaking as developments on the ground dictated, and to turn to regional (OAU) and International (UN) initiatives as its own sub-regional initiatives flagged; the political will and staying power of ECOWAS and ultimately, the growing consensus among states in the region that conflict was self-defeating and that sovereignty interests were best served by a credible common security mechanism. At the same time, it is suggested that this realization of the importance of common security mechanisms at the inter-state level is not enough. Arguably, it is issues of human security which lie within the borders of these states, and which such states are much more reluctant or unable to resolve, that foment violent conflicts.

4.0 ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN SIERRA LEONEAN CONFLICT

4.1 GENESIS OF THE SIERRA LEONEAN CONFLICT

Sierra Leone had its independence in 1961 and inherited a Westminster-style of democratic constitution. In the years immediately following independence, Sierra Leone experienced a genuine multi-party political process that was transparent, representative and accountable, with the state operating as the guardian of civil society. Opposition parties acted freely, expressing their views and winning elections. The judiciary was independent, local government structures were in place with Chiefdom and District Councils, allowing chiefs and ordinary people to participate in the general development of their localities. The economy was growing at an annual rate higher than the world average and exports were steadily rising, with low unemployment.⁷² However, from 1970s, all these advantages began to be lost when Siaka Stevens, leader of the All People's Congress Party (APC), in control of the state after winning elections as opposition leader. He began to establish personal rule by over concentration of power in his own hands. In the process, he weakened the democratic structures of the state, limiting and dominating the autonomy of civil society. State intervention in elections, both local and national, removed competitiveness and accountability, successfully eliminating opposition parties from functioning and reducing parliament to a mere rubber-stamp. Paramount Chiefs ceased to be representatives of their people and became more like party adjuncts. Other manifestations included: fragmentation of state authority, the inability of the government to control or exercise supervisory powers over the state, its agents, or resources, unwillingness of politicians to submit to the constitution. In addition, the judiciary's negative contribution towards upholding good governance and the rule of law, personal, institutional and systematic corruption which impede development. All these among others were crowned by the establishment of a party state in 1978.⁷³

These situations of state collapse provided an auspicious circumstance for violent protests, which led the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh to launch an internal war against Sierra Leone in March, 1991. In his maiden speech, Sankoh assured the world several times that he was

not interested in power, but said he started this "People's war" in order to "liberate" the masses from "the corruption and oppression of the APC government, which indeed had corruptly ruled Sierra Leone for twenty years".⁷⁴ The RUF saw itself as a people's movement for national recovery and aimed to replace Sierra Leone's patrimonial system with a revolutionary egalitarian system. In 1992, the APC was overthrown by RUF and in 1996, the international community mounted pressure, supported by the people to hold elections with hope of ending the wars. Sankoh refused to be part of it and instead ordered that all citizens captured by the RUF should be amputated to see how they will vote.

The RUF itself explained:⁷⁵

A few RUF fighters in the bush went on the rampage and as their own way of stating their objection to the planned elections, they proceeded on a campaign to cut off the hands of innocent villagers as a message that no voting should occur. This was how amputation of hands started in Sierra Leone by desperate RUF men. These men decided to employ the tactics of APC men... (against whose corruption and oppression the "revolution" was started). This learned (sic) one of the most regrettable parts (sic) of the entire RUF war... Sankoh has never condoned acts of violence against civilians by RUF fighters.

Despite this threat, elections were conducted and Alhaji Ahmad TejanKabbah emerged as President. A peace agreement was signed with the RUF in November 1996. The RUF was granted amnesty, and it was to re-organize as a political party and get the men under arms to demobilize and be reintegrated into civil society. Surprisingly, the leader of RUF reneged, and instructed his men to re-launch attacks. Kabbah government restructured the army and disposed of dissent elements. Two months later, a violent coup was staged by disloyal elements of the army with the active collaboration of the rebels. The coupists released Major Johnny Paul Koroma and he was named Head of State with Sankoh as his deputy⁷⁶ The leader of the coup, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The period of his leadership witnessed a complete breakdown of law and order and collapse of the economy. Schools, banks and all activities and services ceased to function. Raping and looting were the order of the day.⁷⁷

4.2 ECOWAS PEACE INITIATIVES IN SIERRA LEONEAN CONFLICT.

Following persistent condemnation of the coup d'état in the sub-region and in response to the request of President Kabbah and OAU leaders, ECOWAS commenced measures aimed at resolving the Sierra Leone crisis. At the initiative of Nigeria's General Sani Abacha, ECOWAS Chairman then and following the request of General Lansana Conte, President of the Republic of Guinea and in consultation with other Heads of State in the sub-region, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of ECOWAS met in Conakry, Republic of Guinea on June 25, 1997, to review the situation in Sierra Leone and explore ways and means for achieving a speedy restoration of constitutional order in the country. It identified three objectives to be pursued by ECOWAS in Sierra Leone i.e., reinstatement of the legitimate government of President Kabbah, return of peace and security and the resolution of the issue of refugees and displaced persons. To actualize these objectives, a Ministerial Committee of four made up of Foreign Ministers of Nigeria, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana was established.⁷⁸ In condemning the coup ECOWAS gave the coupists a two-week deadline within which to relinquish power and peacefully hand over to President Kabbah. Similarly, President Robert Mugabe, the then Chairman of OAU warned that military takeover of governments was getting out of fashion in Africa and urged the coup leaders to respect world opinion and return power to the legitimate government of Sierra Leone. Also, the then Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku described the coup as a "retrogressive step" and the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan who also disapproved of the coup, expressed support for whatever measures to restore the ousted but legitimate elected government. The U.S. called on "those claiming power in Freetown to return power promptly to the country's elected leadership and parliament."⁷⁹

ECOWAS held series of peace accords with the junta with a view to ending the conflict. After the Abidjan meeting of July 17, 1997, there was much optimism after a broad agreement was reached for reinstatement of Kabbah. This hope was shattered when Koroma made a statement on national radio and television that it would not handover to anyone until 2001.⁸⁰ Accordingly, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ECOWAS met at ECOWAS Secretariat, Abuja from August 27-28, 1997 and recommended the establishment of an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Sierra Leone to be known as ECOMOG II, to assist in bringing about the immediate restoration to power of the legitimate government of Sierra Leone.⁸¹ Following the refusal of the junta to re-instate Kabbah, ECOMOG implemented the mandate given to it by ECOWAS leaders and restored the democratically elected government of Kabbah in February 1998. The re-installation of Kabbah was witnessed by President Lansana Conte of Guinea, Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali, and Abacha of Nigeria. Also in attendance were, the Secretary-General of OAU, Salim Ahmad Salim and Ibrahim Fall, who represented the United Nations Secretary-General.⁸² The relief after ECOMOG's success was palpable, Donaldson Pontis, a teacher of the Murray Town Primary School in Freetown echoed the views of most Sierra Leoneans when he explained:⁸³

Our sleep is no longer disturbed by the nightly barrage of gunfire that was an every day thing during the AFRC/RUF nine-month reign. No longer do we go to sleep fearing that our homes will be attacked by night-time raiders, our wives and sisters ravaged and our property stolen. We thank ECOMOG for bringing us peace.

However, the rebels continued fighting and succeeded in regaining control of more than half of the country. Thus, RUF in alliance with AFRC and dissident members of the Sierra Leonean Army launched a brutal attack on Freetown in January 1999.⁸⁴ During the attack, the rebel forces perpetrated abuses on a large scale.

There were mass rapes, killings, torture and amputation of limbs of hundreds of innocent civilians. About 5,000 people lost their lives in that attack. In the circumstance, negotiations with the rebels were reopened to forestall further violence and to restore peace and stability in the country. Thus, on May 18, 1999 the government of Kabbah and the RUF signed a ceasefire agreement, which came into effect on May 24, 1999. The agreement guaranteed the release of FodaySankoh, who was in detention in Nigeria. Thereafter, there was the Lome Peace Accord of July 7, 1999 between the RUF and the government of Sierra Leone which provided for the RUF to be converted into a political party with FodaySankoh as the Vice Chairman under Kabbah as well as the Chairman of a Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development.⁸⁵ By this accord, ECOMOG was withdrawn and replaced by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

4.3 CHALLENGES OF ECOMOG IN SIERRA LEONEAN CONFLICT

ECOMOG was unable to solidly defeat the rebels and secure the surrounding country side. The type of terrain and the rebels better knowledge of it hampered ECOMOG efforts to gain control of the hinterland. ECOMOG superior fire power was not effective against the rebels guerrilla tactics, to which the densely-forested region in the north eastern part of the country lends itself. Significantly, the rebels controlled several diamond mines and used the proceeds to fund their activities. In addition, ECOMOG lacked the requisite equipment and logistical support to accomplish its objectives. A shortage of trucks and helicopters as well as weapons and ammunition restricted its activities and limited its effectiveness.

Former ECOMOG Force Commander, Nigeria's Major-General Timothy Shelpidi acknowledged that his force did not have sufficient number of helicopters. He claimed that ECOMOG could have defeated the rebels if it had possessed appropriate counter-insurgency military equipment, such as the M1-24 helicopter gunship⁸⁶

Furthermore, troop-contributing countries added to their woes by failing to coordinate their actions. ECOMOG National Contingents did not work together at an operational level. According to the former defence Adviser to British High Commission in Sierra Leone, Col. Peter Norman, participating ECOMOG states did not accept information from other countries with troops in the field and operated autonomously. Norman asserted that this lack of coordination was "the nag" for ECOMOG⁸⁷. Corruption, ill-discipline, and lack of esprit de corps figured heavily in ECOMOG's problems. Many numbers of the officer corps were in Sierra Leone for personal gain. ECOMOG forces were accused of selling some of the logistical support that was provided to them. Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) and foot soldiers became entrepreneurs, on a small scale. As a Western Military source put it, "ECOMOG soldiers have often been too busy doing other things to perform their assigned duties; patrolling is often lax and cursory"⁸⁸ ECOMOG's operation in Sierra Leone was made more difficult by largely unforeseen factors beyond its control. For instance, the RUF received significant level of support from Burkina Faso and Liberia in arming and training the rebels. ECOMOG Force Commander and Nigeria's Major-General Felix Mujakperuo threatened Burkina Faso and Liberia militarily said that "ECOMOG will no longer watch this mischief by supposed leaders..in view of the danger it poses to us and the whole sub-region... we shall proceed to strike at all channels involved in this movement of heavy arms and ammunition to the rebels by land and sea"⁸⁹.

5.0 ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN GUINEA – BISSAUAN CONFLICT

5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE GUINEA – BISSAUAN CONFLICT

The dismissal of Army Chief of Staff, General Ansumane Mane precipitated an uprising by army officers on June 7, 1998. In January, 1998, Guinea-Bissau's President, Joao BenardVierira suspended Mane following allegations that Mane was involved in supplying arms to the Casamance Separatists in Senegal.⁹⁰ Mane maintained his innocence and a Parliamentary inquiry into the allegation was set up. Before the results of the inquiry were announced, Vieira replaced Mane with Brigadier General Humberto in June, 1998. Accordingly, the army staged a coup d'etat in retaliation which gained the support of majority of army Forces, embittered by long standing grievances over poor conditions and low wages.⁹¹

5.2 ECOWAS PEACE INITIATIVES IN GUINEA – BISSAUAN CONFLICT

Vieira wrote to General AbdulsalamiAbubakar then Nigeria Head of State Abubakar, who was ECOWAS Chairman and requested that ECOMOG be deployed in Guinea-Bissau. A meeting of ECOWAS Foreign and Defence Ministers was accordingly convened on July 3, 1998 to consider this request. The meeting condemned the rebellion, reaffirmed their support for Vieira's democratically elected government and recommended that the sphere of activities and mandate of ECOMOG be broadened to extend to Guinea-

Bissau⁹² Following the intervention of ECOWAS, an accord was reached in Abuja in November 1998, where Vieira and Mane agreed on the followings: Total withdrawal from Guinea-Bissau of all foreign troops, the deployment of an ECOWAS Military Observer Group interposition force which will take over from the

withdrawn force, weapons amnesty for both sides; the immediate formation of a unified government and elections set for not later than March, 1999.⁹³

Unfortunately, in May, 1999 renewed violence broke the shaky truce signed between President Viera and Brigadier General Mane. ECOMOG troops could not prevent the ousting of President Vieira on May 7, 1999 by Mane and his military junta.

5.3 CHALLENGES OF ECOMOG IN GUINEA – BISSAUAN CONFLICT

The collapse of the peace process in Guinea-Bissau dealt a blow to the credibility of the regional bloc ECOWAS and its claims that it can provide security in the West Africa sub-region. The failure of ECOMOG to prevent the coup was an indication that the force level provided was an inadequate response to the conflict in Guinea-Bissau, which raises the issue of the efficacy of providing sub-unit sized contributions to manage conflicts that in the end require troops to conduct combat-style operations. More important, it illustrates the dilemma of implementing a peace agreement that not all parties to a conflict recognize.

Furthermore, due to financial constraints, the required number of troops were not deployed on time.⁹⁴ Logistical problems also hampered the effectiveness of the force in Guinea –Bissau. As the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan observed:⁹⁵

Owing to the lack of adequate communication equipment, troops operating in other parts of the country generally returned on the same day to Bissau to reduce the risk of being cut off from contact with the force headquarters. To enhance its patrol and reconnaissance activities in Bissau and elsewhere in the country, ECOMOG has indicated a need, in particular for four-wheel drive vehicles, International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) and Mobil Radio Communication equipment.

Thus, when hostilities flared up on May 6, 1999, ECOMOG experienced a communication breakdown and it was impossible to establish contact with the ECOMOG High command. The small size of the operation also compromised its ability to carry out its duties. As observed by the then ECOWAS Executive Secretary in his report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, “the limited troop strength and scant resources of the ECOMOG force currently operating in Guinea-Bissau are infact delaying or reducing some of its activities”. According to ECOMOG, insufficient number of troops prevented it from deploying along the Guinea-Bissau/Senegal border, as called for in the November 1998, Abuja Accord. Thus, when the junta ousted President Vieira in 1999, ECOMOG soldiers were in no position to prevent the renewed fighting.⁹⁶

Despite these challenges, the ECOMOG force in Guinea-Bissau signaled a welcome and significant departure from previous initiatives. The charge that ECOMOG is a Nigeria tool was absent from this mission as the force was comprised of one Anglophone and three Francophone countries. ECOMOG also operated in accordance with a clearly defined mandate. A comprehensive agreement dated March 22, 1997 and signed between ECOWAS and representatives from the two parties to the conflict put in place a legal framework for ECOMOG’s presence on the ground. The text defined ECOMOG’s mandate as monitoring the ceasefire and thereby facilitating the holding of elections. Furthermore, the document specified the privileges and immunities that devolved to ECOMOG as an entity, to contingents participating in the force, and to individuals and included other regulations concerning the various rights and responsibilities of ECOMOG and its person.

6.0 CONCLUSION

ECOMOG has established a commendable record in sub-regional peace-keeping and peace enforcement. Although, ECOMOG intervention in the Liberian civil war led to a protraction of the conflict, the efforts of the intervention force eventually brought the conflict to an end and created the necessary environment for election in 1997. However, the intervention of ECOMOG in Sierra Leone did not bring about a similar outcome as it did in Liberia, but it provided the necessary support for the legitimate government of Sierra Leone as well as protection for the people in the face of rebel brutality and barbarism. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, as a result of the weakness of ECOMOG contingent, it failed in its responsibility of stopping violence between the opposing factions. Political will and cohesion are necessary for any peace-keeping force to succeed. In the case of ECOMOG, Nigeria and Liberia played crucial roles in mustering the collective will of ECOWAS states towards the formation of ECOMOG and its eventual deployment to Liberia. ECOMOG’S initial political cohesion was challenged by disagreements expressed by some member states over the formation of ECOMOG and the legality of its intervention in Liberia’s conflict. In addition, there must be a clear mandate detailing the role and orientation of the force in the theatre of conflict. The oscillation of ECOMOG activities between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement in Liberia and Sierra Leone were largely attributable to imprecise mandates. In all cases, logically, ill-equipped and poorly funded peace-keeping missions were unable to defeat rebels in guerrilla warfare and a military statement forced political accommodation and appeasement of local warlords.

In spite of the progress made in bringing peace to the conflicting member states, there are several areas to be covered. The peace process is still fragile in the countries earlier discussed. In Liberia, the challenge of

National reconciliation and reconstruction is enormous and ECOWAS member states must collectively support the country. Both Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau need tremendous international assistance to rebuild infrastructure and provide public services. The community should therefore offer reintegration assistance to these countries to enable them rehabilitate their ex-combatants in the form of apprenticeships, formal education, agricultural work and job placements. Furthermore, conflict-prevention measures and the pursuit of negotiated solution to conflicts remain the best strategy for peace in the sub-region. There is also the need for the creation of a conducive, political atmosphere that will enhance harmonious relationship and sense of belonging. Thus, there is the need to promote the structure and processes that strengthen democracy, human rights, good governance, economic recovery and growth as valid means of eliminating conflict in the community states.

Fortunately, most of the challenges discussed in this chapter are being addressed by the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.⁹⁷ There is no doubt that conflict prevention will be cheaper in financial and other terms than peace-keeping operations. Thus, conflict prevention as the main strategy for the community's conflict management deserves to be given much more attention. A successful programme of conflict prevention will reduce the incidence of conflicts that require peace keeping and this will lessen the cost of peacekeeping operations in the sub-region.

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