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African workers Welcome ECOWAS' Revocation of Sanctions on Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Guinea and call for the intensification of constructive dialogue and genuine diplomacy.

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) warmly welcomes the recent decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lift, with immediate effect, a large part of the sanctions imposed on Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Guinea on account of military takeover of power. Nevertheless, our organisation remains deeply concerned about the prospective withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS, recognising the potential adverse effects on regional unity, socioeconomic development, and the overall wellbeing of citizens.

Recognising the significance of the unity of ECOWAS and, by extension, Africa's unity for the continent's integration and development, prosperity, and global relevance, ITUC-Africa wish to underscore the critical need for the concerned member states to reconsider their withdrawal. We advocate for a constructive dialogue within the 12-month deadline outlined in the ECOWAS treaty to resolve this impasse.

Importantly, we urge ECOWAS to urgently reassess its efficiency, liberate itself from external influences, and prioritise the welfare of West Africa's and Africa's populace. It is critical that the organisation fundamentally fit into the logic of its 2020 vision of moving from the ECOWAS of States to the ECOWAS of the people.

As African workers, we reiterate our conviction and preference for a people-driven, people-centred, and people-minded democracy that should be "the only game in town". Democracy must serve the people by guaranteeing their welfare and well-being. Also, we reaffirm that for real and enabling democracy to be achieved and thrive, strong institutions must be built, and the sanctity of the rule of the rule of law must be vigilantly and eternally upheld. As organised workers, we reiterate our commitment to contributing to attaining these ideals. To this effect, African workers will actively prosecute the Global Campaign for Democracy that the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) will launch on the 4th of March 2024. We believe in plural and participatory democracy and will continue to engage it to ensure that it serves us better.

Therefore, with the lifting of sanctions on these countries, ITUC-Africa urges the intensification of diplomatic efforts and negotiations to address the underlying governance issues that contribute to the military takeover in the region. ECOWAS should actively facilitate, through diplomatic means, the restoration of democratic principles and

the rule of law in the affected countries. This process should involve legitimate and procedures and inclusive consultations with all critical stakeholders such as workers and their trade union organisations, in alignment with the sub-regional bodies' standards.

For workers, businesses, economic sectors and people who have suffered from the effects of the sanctions, we urge ECOWAS to seek and deploy bilateral and multilateral cooperation and assistance mechanisms to aid and speed up recovery.

Similarly, we also want to urge ECOWAS to find the courage and political will to discourage constitutional manipulation and manoeuvring, especially by civilian actors, which is one of the actions diminishing trust and confidence in national democratic projects and processes.

In conclusion, ITUC-Africa calls upon all stakeholders to prioritise dialogue, diplomacy, unity, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity to overcome the current impasse while steadfastly upholding democracy, human rights, and regional integration in the ECOWAS region.



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