



THE WEST AFRICA  
CITIZEN THINK TANK

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**HOW TO IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE AND  
EFFECTIVENESS OF WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL  
ORGANIZATIONS?**

**LE DÉBAT DE WATHI**

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**Introductory note**

# HOW TO IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS?

## 1. Why this theme?

- **Because** the large space now occupied by West African States and partly by Central and Northern African States has always been a space for the movement of people, goods, services, ideas, cultural, economic, political and social practices. And today more than ever, no one disputes the need to deepen African integration in all its dimensions in order to improve the individual and collective well-being of the populations.
- **Because** regional organizations (sometimes called sub-regional) are the institutions embodying the will to bring about integration in political, economic as well as technical domains, and the quality of their governance determines, at least in part, the progress, failures, delays and observable difficulties in achieving the integration objectives set by the States.
- **Because** citizens of the member States of regional organizations are generally unaware of the mandates, operating principles, accomplishments and challenges of these organizations, which is not likely to strengthen their legitimacy among those who are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of their activities.
- **Because** there is often strong criticism from citizens in all countries about the ineffectiveness of regional organizations in implementing their mandates, the lack of transparency in their internal governance, the underwhelming results of their actions,

their inability to fully exercise their mandates within the limits set by their founding texts and with a minimum of autonomy from national policy makers.

- **Because** the largest and most well-known organization in the region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is now promoting the integration of people by people to move away from the perception that the populations have that regional integration only concerns the States through the solidarity of their leaders.
- **Because** many regional organizations with specific mandates in very important areas such as health, education, scientific research, environment, agriculture, monetary management, are little known to the citizens and therefore rarely invited to report on their activities and the use of the resources allocated to them.
- **Because** the revival of important debates such as the future of the CFA franc, also used in countries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), also raises the question of overlapping regional organizations which have similar mandates for economic integration and calls for a reflection on the future of the current frameworks.
- **Because** in order to face the economic, political, security, cultural and social challenges ahead, the African continent, which is experiencing strong population growth, needs efficient regional organizations that are exemplary in managing their human and financial resources, realistic in their ambitions and open to regular evaluation of their contributions to the general interest of the populations of the region.

## 2. What are the main topics to be explored?

- What regional organizations are best known to the people in the region?
- What regional organizations are perceived to be most useful and effective in fulfilling their mandates?

- What are the principles and governing bodies of regional organizations?
- What is the extent of national influences on the governance of regional organizations?
- What are the budgets allocated to regional organizations and how are they funded?
- How dependent are regional organizations on sources of funding outside the region and the African continent?
- What are the good and bad examples of transparency and accountability in regional organizations?
- What do the evaluation documents, audits and other reports on the governance and effectiveness of regional organizations reveal?
- What is the track record of regional organizations in preventing and resolving armed conflicts and political crises in the region?
- What to think of the multiplication of regional and sub-regional organizations in West Africa (ECOWAS versus UEMOA, Council of the Entente, Union of the Mano River countries, G5 Sahel, etc.)
- What is the track record of regional organizations in the areas of economic and monetary integration, development of intra-regional trade, and development of regional infrastructure and industries?
- How do institutions such as the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOWAS Court of Justice contribute to the integration and civic control of the action of regional organizations and their Member States?
- What is the interest of West African civil societies in supervising the activities of sub-regional organizations?
- Which regional organizations have transparent and modern human resources policies and develop capacities for strategic analysis for the whole region?
- What is the relationship between West African regional organizations and equivalent organizations in other African regions, including Central Africa?
- Are regional organizations an obstacle or an indispensable step toward African integration?

### 3. How to participate in the debate?

- Contributions by experts in the issues discussed are welcome. So are observations, accounts, opinions, and recommendations from all citizens.
- We particularly welcome articles that refer to one or more specific countries, are based on concrete examples and include recommendations for action and reform.
- You can submit short articles (500–1000 words) or longer ones (1500–2000 words). Although the maximum length of a contribution is 2000 words, short articles are more likely to be selected and published by WATHI. All articles must be accessible to the general public, well written and structured.
- Without having to write a structured article, you can send your comments, observations, and recommendations to [infowathi@wathi.org](mailto:infowathi@wathi.org). The most relevant contributions will be published on the website.
- You can also submit a short audio or video recording to share your experiences and concrete reform proposals.
- We invite you to send your article with a 50–word biography and preferably a good picture of yourself.

## CONTACTS

[www.wathi.org](http://www.wathi.org)

Please send your articles and contributions at: [infowathi@wathi.org](mailto:infowathi@wathi.org)

The debate is also taking place on WATHI's Facebook and Twitter accounts:

Link to Facebook : <http://on.fb.me/1L2kOSk>

Link to Twitter : [https://twitter.com/WATHI\\_Africa](https://twitter.com/WATHI_Africa)

Link to LinkedIn : <http://bit.ly/2otcXHq>