

## Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic community with a surface area of 3.8 million square miles, which encompasses 17% of the African continent. ECOWAS was created to increase economic and political amongst its members. The fifteen member states are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The ECOWAS Treaty (also known as the Treaty of Lagos) established the community when it was signed in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 28, 1975. A revised treaty was later signed on July 24, 1993. Mauritania was a founding member, but withdrew officially from the trade bloc in 1999.

**Number of member countries:** 15

**Region(s):** Africa

**Headquarters:** Abuja, Nigeria

**Composition:** Plurilateral

**Coverage:** Goods and Services

**Signed:** July 24, 1993

**Web Site:** <http://www.ecowas.int/>

## Member Countries

|               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Benin         | Mali         |
| Burkina Faso  | Niger        |
| Cabo Verde    | Nigeria      |
| Cote d'Ivoire | Senegal      |
| Ghana         | Sierra Leone |
| Guinea        | The Gambia   |
| Guinea-Bissau | Togo         |
| Liberia       |              |

## History

**February 1965** - Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone sign an agreement.

**April 1972** - General Gowon of Nigeria and General Eyadema of Togo reintroduce the idea of a West African regional trade agreement.

**1973** - General Gowon and General Eyadema visit West African countries eliciting support for a new regional trade agreement.

**December 1973** - Potential member states meet in Lomé, Togo, to review a draft of the treaty.

**1974** - Experts and jurists meet in Accra, Ghana, to further review a draft of the treaty.

**1975** - Ministers meet in Monrovia, Liberia, for the final review of the treaty draft.

**May 28, 1975** - The Treaty of ECOWAS, which established the economic community, is signed in Lagos, Nigeria.

**1977** - Cape Verde becomes the sixteenth member of ECOWAS.

**July 24, 1993** - Member states sign a revised treaty.

**February 25, 1998** - ECOWAS signs the Protocol on Relations between the African Economic Community and the Regional Economic Communities in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**1999** - An ECOWAS Summit takes place in December, where the member states agree upon a Protocol for the Establishment of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, management and resolution, and peace and security. Mauritania withdraws from ECOWAS because of disagreements with the decisions that were made during the Summit.

**2000** - ECOWAS signs the Cotonou Agreement, an agreement between the ACP Group and the European Community.

**2001** - The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signs an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) under which both organizations agree to cooperate in eight areas in furtherance of their common interest.

**2004** - ECOWAS and the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA) sign a general cooperation agreement to enhance the coordination and harmonization of their programs. It provides for the creation of a Joint Technical Secretariat to enhance the coordination of their joint activities.

**July 5, 2006** - ECOWAS signs an agreement with the Government of the Republic of Benin for the hosting of the headquarters of the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP), a specialized institution of ECOWAS for promoting the efficient exploitation and distribution of the energy resources of the region.

**2008** - ECOWAS signs a comprehensive agreement with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), an agreement that will provide the linchpin for attracting Chinese private sector investment into strategic sectors of the West African economy.

**2009** - A Memorandum of Understanding is signed in Ouagadougou between ECOWAS and the ITC. The memorandum is designed to improve the volume of intra-Community trade within the RECs and thus stimulate economic development.

**2012** - ECOWAS and China sign an agreement for cooperation in infrastructure development, trade and investment.

**2013** - Ministers that are responsible for ECOWAS affairs in Member States approve the creation of a Regional Investment Guarantee Agency with \$1 billion of U.S. capital in order to help mitigate political risks associated with investments in West Africa.

**September 27, 2013** - ECOWAS launches Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF), with headquarters in Lomé, Togo.

**2015** - ECOWAS Common External Tariff goes into force on January 1st.