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ERERA, ECOWAS Gender Development Centre Agree on Measures to Advance Gender Mainstreaming in West Africa's Energy Sector

The ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) and the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre (EGDC) on May 18, 2023 ended their three-day meeting in Accra, Ghana with an agreement to advance gender mainstreaming ideals in the energy sector in ECOWAS Member States.

The technical meeting, the first between the sister institutions, sought to initiate and develop a framework for collaboration between them.

Specifically, the meeting set out to define the institutional framework for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the energy sector, identify areas that ERERA can effectively implement the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming for Energy Access and the ECOWAS Directive on Gender Assessment in Energy Projects, agree on specific areas the EGDC can assist ERERA to build the capacity of its stakeholders in promoting gender mainstreaming in the power sector.

In this regard, officials of the two institutions agreed on some activities, including a joint implementation of the EGDC's support programme for brilliant but indigent girls through the provision of "scholarships for excellence" or internships with a focus on energy as well as technical support from ERERA for the organization of a regional forum on the African Continental Free Trade Area (ZLECAF) related to gender.

Among others, both ERERA and the EGDC are to broaden the partnership within the framework of support for women's entrepreneurship and inclusion in energy matters. They are also to sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

In his welcome remarks at the opening of the meeting on May 16, 2023, ERERA Regulatory Council Member, Mr. Aly Mar Ndiaye, expressed the hope that the meeting would enable the two institutions to better understand each other, a step which would make their collaboration much easier.

Stating that ERERA's main mission is to regulate cross-border trade in electricity among ECOWAS Member States, Mr. Ndiaye also explained that ERERA has an obligation, as a specialized energy institution, to ensure the implementation of all regional energy policies and directives, including the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming for Energy Access as well as the Directive on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Projects, which are both directly related to ERERA's core mandates.

He further listed what ERERA has done so far in promoting gender mainstreaming and expressed the hope that from the documents to be considered, the meeting would find concrete areas of collaboration and a coordination mechanism for the benefit of all ECOWAS citizens.

In her own address, the Director of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, Mrs. Sandra Oulate Fattoh, emphasized the intervention strategy of the EGDC, which works in close collaboration with Member States, regional and international institutions as well as civil society organizations to translate the ECOWAS gender policy into projects and programmes with strong social impacts at the community level.

She stressed the importance of ECOWAS agencies and institutions to collaborate more closely in order to harmonize strategies and pool resources to accelerate the involvement as well as visibility of women and girls in the energy sector.

She underlined the commitment of the EGDC to maintain good collaboration with all ECOWAS institutions and other entities which are mobilized around the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for the benefit of the West African community.

Mrs. Oulate Fattoh said the EGDC will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, "20 years in the service of gender equity and equality in the region".