



FORUM 2025 *Concept Note*

Energy Cooperation in West Africa: Current Dynamics and Prospects for Strengthening Integration

CONTEXT

In a context marked by growing challenges in terms of access to energy, energy security, cybersecurity and energy transition in West Africa, regional cooperation appears to be both a strategic and structural response. The West African region benefits from significant energy potential, both in renewable resources (solar, hydroelectric, wind, biomass) and fossil resources. However, the unequal distribution of these resources between countries, their low level of exploitation, combined with the lack or weakness of infrastructure due to investment constraints faced by individual States, raises the question of energy interdependence between these States, whose geographical location and aspirations for economic development make them States with a common destiny. This justifies the development and implementation of policies aimed at expressing and developing the necessary solidarity between these States.

The West African Regional Electricity Market (REM-WA), launched in 2018, embodies this vision of enhanced energy integration. However, the commitment of states in this direction, while significant, also reveals that progress varies from country to country. This observation attests to the existence of numerous challenges that still need to be addressed not only individually, but especially collectively by countries: financing interconnections, risk sharing, harmonization of regulatory frameworks, coordination between national regulators, dispute resolution, etc.

Integration thus continues to face multiple constraints: disparities between national markets, slow regulatory harmonization, difficulties in inter-institutional coordination, financial constraints, and increased risks linked to the interdependence of electricity systems. Furthermore, recent political dynamics in certain countries in the region, notably the withdrawal of certain Member States from the Community, raise new questions about regional governance and the sustainability of common commitments.

It is in this context that the Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) is organizing a regional forum on regulation, bringing together political decision-makers, regulators, operators, technical and financial partners, in order to take stock of energy interdependence between West African states and the progress made in building energy solidarity. The forum will identify levers to strengthen sustainable, equitable and secure energy integration.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

- Take stock of energy interdependence between states connected to the West African electricity exchange system: existing interconnection infrastructure, cross-border flows, bilateral and multilateral agreements.
- Identify the obstacles and opportunities for regional energy integration: technical, economic, legal, political and institutional.
- Strengthen cooperation between national regulators and ERERA, around harmonized governance of the regional market.
- Propose concrete recommendations to improve the efficiency, transparency and predictability of regional electricity regulation.
- Promote multi-stakeholder dialogue (States, regulators, operators, technical and financial partners, civil society) for inclusive and sustainable integration.
- Discuss innovations in financing, digitalization and regulation
- Define a roadmap to accelerate regulatory harmonization, including in the area of cybersecurity and improve regional market governance .





FORUM THEMES

The various sessions of the forum will focus on the following themes:

1. State of regional energy cooperation: assessment of integration and coordination programs

This session will provide a critical assessment of initiatives undertaken to strengthen regional cooperation, including interconnection projects (OMVG, CLSG, Dorsale Nord, etc.), the gradual implementation of the Regional Electricity Market (REM), and the adoption of regional regulations such as those relating to network access or licensing. It will highlight the progress made as well as the persistent gaps between Member States.

The analysis will also focus on the coordination mechanisms between national and regional institutions (ERERA and WAPP), and their effectiveness in supervising cross-border electricity exchanges. The level of effective participation of States, the capacity to appropriate common rules, as well as the robustness of the implementing instruments, will be discussed.

Finally, the panelists will examine how to capitalize on the achievements to take a new step in the operationalization of the regional market: moving from physical integration of networks to effective commercial integration of markets.

2. Geopolitical and institutional challenges: impacts of political dynamics and role of regional institutions

Energy cooperation relies on institutional stability and mutual trust. However, recent political developments (withdrawal of member countries from the Community, military transitions, diplomatic tensions) are weakening the foundations of regional integration and raising questions about the resilience of cooperation frameworks in the face of geopolitical uncertainties.

This session will assess the concrete impacts of these dynamics on contractual commitments, compliance with interconnection schedules, and the functioning of the REM. It will highlight the adaptation strategies developed by regional institutions to maintain the continuity of exchanges and strengthen the technical neutrality of regulation.

The discussions will also focus on the institutional levers for maintaining inclusive energy cooperation, even in the context of political restructuring, and on the modalities of dialogue between regional organisations such as ECOWAS, UEMOA and member states in the management of these sensitive situations.

4. Role of regulators in managing risks linked to interdependence (contractual failures, technical instabilities, etc.)

The growing interconnection of electricity systems makes countries mutually dependent, leading to shared exposure to technical risks (such as outages and frequency fluctuations), commercial risks (including payment defaults), or regulatory risks (non-compliance with obligations). This session will provide an opportunity to discuss the responsibilities and tools available to national regulators and ERERA to anticipate, prevent, or mitigate these risks. The focus will be on market surveillance instruments, alert systems, cross-border coordination, contract supervision, as well





as emergency or coordinated response procedures in the event of an energy crisis affecting several states.

Discussions will focus on default prevention mechanisms, dispute resolution tools (including mechanisms provided for by ERERA), and regulatory approaches to ensure transparency, fairness and continuity of trade.

Particular emphasis will be placed on building strong regulatory capacities, training national stakeholders, and cooperation between regulators, as well as consolidating technical and commercial standards applicable to the regional market.

5. Financing regional interconnections: what innovative solutions?

The development of interconnection infrastructure is a sine qua non for market integration. However, financing needs far exceed the budgetary capacities of states and require innovative and attractive financial packages for investors. Thus, one of the primary obstacles to energy integration is the financing gap for regional infrastructure projects.

This session will explore existing and emerging financing models for electricity interconnections and strategic regional facilities. Discussions will focus on public-private partnerships, credit guarantees, risk-sharing mechanisms, climate instruments, and available multilateral funds. It will also highlight good practices in structuring cross-border projects, the role of regulators in project viability, and the need for integrated regional investment planning.

6. Digitalization and cybersecurity issues in the regional electricity market

The increasing digitalisation of electricity infrastructure, market management systems, and regulatory mechanisms opens up new opportunities for monitoring trade, real-time balancing of interconnected networks, market data management, and operational optimisation for greater efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in the sector. However, it also exposes energy systems to new risks, particularly in terms of cybersecurity.

This session will address ongoing digital transformations (telecontrol, smart metering, cross-border trade management platforms, etc.) as well as the threats related to cyberattacks on critical networks. It will explore the role of regulators in establishing regional cybersecurity standards, the need for coordination between states, and investment in monitoring and rapid response capabilities to digital incidents in order to develop a shared regional culture of cybersecurity in the electricity sector.

7. Harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks: current situation and roadmap

One of the pillars of electricity market integration is the existence of common, clear, and consistent rules. However, significant divergences remain between national legislations regarding network access, pricing, licenses, and compensation mechanisms.

This session will take stock of progress and obstacles to regulatory harmonization in the region, highlighting ERERA's initiatives, feedback from national regulators, and the difficulties encountered in transposing regional texts.





The objective is to co-construct a shared roadmap, accompanied by technical and legal support tools, to accelerate the alignment of national frameworks with the requirements of the regional market, while respecting the institutional specificities of each State.

PARTICIPANTS

- National electricity regulators in the region and beyond
- Representatives of the ministries responsible for energy of ECOWAS member states
- Public and private electricity companies
- Regional organizations (ECOWAS, WAPP, OMVG, OMVS, etc.)
- Technical and financial partners
- Civil society organizations and academic institutions

EXPECTED RESULTS

- A diagnosis of the current state of West African energy integration and its challenges
- Concrete proposals to strengthen regional regulation, secure interconnected projects and adapt legal frameworks
- A renewed commitment from stakeholders to coordinate efforts and consolidate the achievements of the Regional Electricity Market
- A roadmap for the harmonization of regulatory frameworks, risk management and the development of regional infrastructure.

PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Date and place: October 23 and 24, 2025, Cotonou [Republic of Benin]
- Working languages: French and English (with simultaneous interpretation)
- Format: In-person with the possibility of virtual participation
- Organization: Plenary sessions, bilateral meetings

