

OPENING STATEMENT

BY HON. JUSTICE CHARLYNE M. BRUMSKINE
PRESIDENT OF THE COURT

AT THE ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR THE NEWLY
APPOINTED JUDGES OF THE COURT

*Theme: "Becoming an ECOWAS Judge: Judicial Excellence,
Institutional Integration and Effective Adjudication"*

Zuma Rock Resort, Niger State, Nigeria

Monday, 19th October 2026

Honourable Vice-President of the Court

Distinguished Colleague, Honourable Judges of the Court

Professor Friday C. Nwoke, former Vice-President of the Court

The Acting Chief Registrar

Directors

Heads of Divisions

Big Welcome

Executive Assistants to the Honourable Judges

Staff of the Court

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I welcome you all to the opening of this Orientation Programme as we commence our collective service as members of the newly appointed Judges of the Community Court of Justice, ECOWAS.

Allow me, first, to extend my warmest congratulations to my distinguished colleagues, on our assumption of office on 13th October 2026. Our appointment reflects the confidence reposed in us by the Authority of Heads of State and Government and by our respective Member States. We join the Court together at a decisive moment in its history, and I am honoured to serve alongside each of you.

I also wish to express my profound gratitude to you for the trust you have placed in me in electing me President of the Court. I accept the responsibility with humility, and I look forward to working with each of you in the spirit of mutual respect, collegiality and shared commitment to the Court's mandate.

Hon Vice President, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this Programme, "Becoming an ECOWAS Judge: Judicial Excellence, Institutional Integration and Effective Adjudication" captures the essence of the responsibility we have collectively undertaken. Each of us comes to this Court with distinguished experience, acquired at the national benches, at the Bar or in public service. That experience is a valuable asset. Yet, becoming a Judge at the ECOWAS Court involves more than the transfer of skills from one court to another. It calls for an understanding of a distinct legal order, of the Community instruments that define our mandate, and of the body of jurisprudence that this Court has built over more than two decades.

Ours is a regional Court whose jurisdiction cuts across Member States with different legal traditions, languages and judicial cultures. We are entrusted with the interpretation and application of Community law, the protection of human rights, and the settlement of disputes between the Community and its staff. The coming days are designed to deepen our understanding of the mandate, jurisdiction, practice and procedure of the Court and related matters.

This Programme has been structured primarily as a judicial and institutional induction. Its purpose is to equip us with the knowledge required to discharge our functions efficiently and effectively. It draws principally on the institutional knowledge and practical experience available from within, through a former Vice-President of the Court as well as officers of the Registry, Research and Documentation, and Administration and Finance Departments of the Court. That choice reflects a conviction that the most enduring knowledge of an institution resides in those who have served it, and that continuity is best secured when that knowledge is transmitted from one generation of Judges to the next. That conviction carries particular weight today, for an entirely new College of Judges assumes office together, and the continuity of the

Court's jurisprudence and practice depends on our drawing fully on that institutional memory.

Hon Vice President, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next five days, we will be introduced to the institutional identity of the Court and its place within the Community legal order; to the structure that supports the judicial function; to the standards of judicial ethics and conduct expected of every Member of this Court; and to the Court's approach to jurisdiction, admissibility, the sources of law and its landmark jurisprudence. We will engage with practice and procedure, the role of the Judge Rapporteur, interlocutory practice, courtroom management and judicial deliberation, as well as with the Electronic Case Management System through hands-on sessions. We will also receive briefings on reparations and remedies, on the status of enforcement of the Court's judgments, and on the administrative and protocol arrangements that govern our service.

I encourage each of us to engage fully with every session, to ask questions freely, to share our perspectives, and to draw on the experience of our resource person and the officers of the Court because this orientation is an opportunity for us to build a common institutional vision, familiarise ourselves with the practical demands of our judicial responsibilities, and establish a strong foundation for our collective service.

In line with the theme of the programme, allow me to share three commitments which, in my view, should guide us as we take up our duties:

The first is independence and integrity - the authority of this Court rests, ultimately, on the confidence that litigants, Member States and the

citizens of the Community place in us. That confidence is earned, case by case, through fairness, impartiality and integrity, and it can be lost by a single lapse. I trust that each of us will uphold the highest standards of independence, impartiality and personal conduct, both on and off the bench.

The second is collegiality - a Court is not a collection of individual Judges; it is a single institution that speaks with one voice through its decisions. Our strength lies in rigorous deliberation, mutual respect and a shared commitment to coherent and consistent jurisprudence. I look forward to building that culture with each of you.

The third is effectiveness - we inherit a substantial caseload, and the Community expects timely justice. We must therefore work diligently to reduce delays, to make full use of our Electronic Case Management System, and to align our work with the priorities of the Court's Strategic Plan 2026-2030. We must also continue to engage Member States on the enforcement of the Court's judgments, for a judgment that is not implemented does not deliver the justice it promises.

Hon Vice President, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to recognise the Acting Chief Registrar and the entire staff of the Court for the dedication and swiftness with which this Programme has been prepared shortly after our assumption of office at the Court. I thank Professor Friday C. Nwoke, former Vice-President of the Court, who has graciously agreed to serve as resource person for this Programme and to share his wisdom and experience with us. His presence is a reminder that service to this Court continues long after a term of office ends. I also thank the officers of the Court who will serve

as presenters, and whose expertise sustains the daily work of this Institution.

To the staff of the Court, I say that you are indispensable partners in the discharge of our judicial mandate. The effectiveness of this Court depends on a relationship between Judges and staff founded on mutual respect, clarity of roles and a shared institutional purpose.

To my colleagues, I say, the work ahead of us is demanding, but it is also deeply rewarding. In serving this Court, we serve the ideals of integration, the rule of law and the protection of human dignity on which our Community was founded.

With these remarks, I wish us all fruitful deliberations.

I now have the singular honour and privilege to declare the Orientation Programme for the newly appointed Judges of the Community Court of Justice, ECOWAS, duly open.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Merci.

Obrigada.