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Your Excellencies, *Your Excellency,*

OPEN LETTER TO ALL HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS **MEMBER STATES**

I have noted with deep concern and sadness, the past and recent developments unfolding in the West African sub-region, particularly the pronouncement by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger of their intention to exit from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

As one of the founders of our regional economic community, it is incumbent upon me to speak on behalf of the 14 Heads of State and Government who joined me in Lagos, on 27th May, 1975, to establish ECOWAS. Since its inception, the regional bloc has made a number of major accomplishments, including trade liberalisation, right of West Africans to live legitimately in any country within the Community, as well as successful peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. ECOWAS, despite its shortcomings, has become an example of regional integration for the wider continent.

Having achieved all of the above, it saddens me to learn that ECOWAS is threatened with disunity following the announcement by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, 3 important Member States of their intention to leave the Community. The impact of such a decision will have far-reaching implications for the ordinary citizens who have been the major beneficiaries of regional integration.

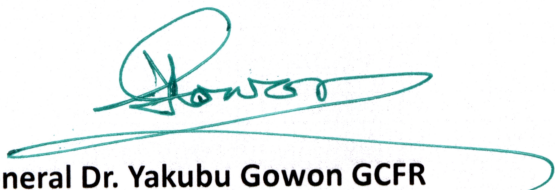
Therefore, on behalf of all the founding fathers of the Community and myself, I urge ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, including the leaders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, to put aside their differences and reunite for the peace, stability and prosperity of our sub-region. I call on all West African leaders to immediately consider the implementation of the following:

1. Lifting of all sanctions that have been imposed on Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger;
2. Withdrawal by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger of their notices to leave ECOWAS; and
3. Participation of all 15 ECOWAS Heads of State in a Summit to discuss the future of the community, regional security and stability, as well as the role of the international community given the current geopolitical context.

I wish to once more reiterate to regional leaders that ECOWAS is more than a coalition of States, it is a community established for the good of our peoples, based on shared history, culture and tradition. Neither my generation, nor present or future generations will understand or forgive the breakup of our Community.

I thank you all for giving due consideration to this appeal, which has been made with sincerity and a deep sense of moral responsibility. I urge all other elders in the sub-region to join me in this campaign to immediately restore unity and shared purpose within ECOWAS. Let me assure all parties that I am ready for further engagements to ensure that our Community remains united.

Long live ECOWAS and God Bless the Citizens of the Community!



General Dr. Yakubu Gowon GCFR
Former Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and
Surviving Founding Leader of ECOWAS

On behalf of the Founding Leaders of ECOWAS.