



H.E. President **Julius Maada Bio**

AND THE REIMAGINING OF ECOWAS:
A New Era Of Regional Integration, Security,
And Economic Renewal

ECOWAS Leadership Magazine – Special Edition

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A New Chapter in West African Integration

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that we present this special edition of the ECOWAS Leadership Magazine, chronicling the chairmanship of His Excellency Julius Maada Bio at a defining moment in the history of ECOWAS.

This publication is more than a record of diplomatic engagements and high-level summits. It reflects a region in motion - grappling with complex security challenges, navigating economic transformation, and reimagining the meaning of regional unity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Under President Bio's stewardship, ECOWAS has continued to assert its relevance as a cornerstone of West African cooperation. From advancing dialogue on constitutional order and democratic governance, to strengthening peace and security frameworks in the Sahel and beyond, this period has underscored the importance of collective action in addressing shared challenges.

Equally significant has been the renewed emphasis on economic integration. The push for deeper trade linkages, infrastructure connectivity, and investment mobilisation reflects a growing recognition that sustainable peace is inseparable from inclusive development. Initiatives such as regional investment platforms and cross-border energy cooperation point to a future in which West Africa's economic potential is more fully realised for its citizens.

This magazine captures those efforts in detail - not as isolated events, but as part of a broader and evolving vision for the region. It highlights the diplomacy, the negotiations, the partnerships, and the ideas that are shaping ECOWAS today.

We extend our appreciation to all leaders, institutions, partners, and stakeholders whose commitment continues to sustain the ideals of regional integration. Their collective efforts remind us that ECOWAS is not merely an institution - it is a shared project of hope, resilience, and progress.

As readers engage with this edition, we invite them to reflect on the journey so far and the path ahead. West Africa stands at a critical juncture, and the choices made today will determine the strength, stability, and prosperity of generations to come.

May this publication serve both as a record and as an inspiration for continued cooperation and unity across our region.

State House Media and Communications Unit-Office of the President
ECOWAS Leadership Magazine – Special Edition



FOREWORD

President Julius Maada Bio

*Chairman, ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State
and Government*

“When I assumed the Chairmanship of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in June 2025, I did so with a clear sense of both responsibility and urgency. Our region stands at a defining moment in its history. West Africa is home to extraordinary human and natural resources, a dynamic youth population, and immense economic potential. Yet, we also face pressing challenges, ranging from political instability and security threats to structural barriers that hinder integration and shared prosperity.

In accepting this mandate, I outlined four key priorities to guide my stewardship of the Community: strengthening democracy and constitutional governance, enhancing regional peace and security cooperation, advancing economic integration, and reinforcing the institutional credibility of ECOWAS.

These priorities are not abstract aspirations. They are practical imperatives that speak directly to the lived realities of our citizens. Democracy must deliver stability and inclusion. Security cooperation must protect lives and livelihoods. Economic integration must translate into jobs, trade, and opportunity. And ECOWAS must remain a trusted institution that reflects the hopes of our people.

Over the course of my engagement as Chair, I have had the privilege of working alongside fellow Heads of State, regional institutions, development partners, and stakeholders across West Africa and beyond. These engagements have reaffirmed a central truth: our challenges are shared, and so too must be our solutions.

This publication documents key moments, initiatives, and reflections from this journey. It is not merely a record of activities, but a testament to the collective effort to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and integrated West Africa. My hope is that it serves as both a record of progress and an inspiration for the work that still lies ahead.



“Together, we
can build a stronger
ECOWAS - one that
truly delivers for
its people.”

Julius Maada Bio
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
**Chairman, ECOWAS Authority of Heads
of State and Government**



DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER:

Preserving the Foundations of Regional Stability

For over five decades, ECOWAS has served as a guardian of democratic governance and constitutional rule in West Africa. Under President Julius Maada Bio's chairmanship, that commitment remained at the forefront of the organisation's mission.

From the outset, President Bio emphasized that sustainable peace and development are only possible when democratic institutions are respected and constitutional processes are upheld. His leadership therefore focused on reinforcing the principles that have guided ECOWAS since its transformation from a purely economic community into a regional political and security actor.

One of the defining features of his tenure has been active diplomatic engagement aimed at preventing instability and supporting peaceful political transitions. Across the region, ECOWAS has continued to advocate dialogue, consensus-building, and constitutional governance as the most effective means of resolving political disputes.

President Bio's engagement in Guinea-Bissau reflected ECOWAS's commitment to preserving constitutional order and political stability through dialogue, mediation, and peaceful intervention. Working closely with regional leaders and national stakeholders, he supported efforts to prevent political tensions from escalating while reinforcing democratic processes as the legitimate path to political transition.

Under his leadership, ECOWAS continued to respond proactively to emerging governance challenges across the region, reaffirming its role as both a political union and a peace and security institution. President Bio consistently emphasized that sustainable democracy depends on strong, independent institutions capable of managing elections, upholding the rule of law, and protecting citizens' rights. Drawing on Sierra Leone's own experience of post-conflict recovery and democratic consolidation, he also encouraged member states to strengthen governance frameworks, promote accountability, foster inclusive governance, and expand citizen participation in democratic processes across West Africa.

For ECOWAS, democracy is not merely a political ideal; it is a prerequisite for economic development, social cohesion, and regional stability. President Bio's leadership has reinforced this understanding by ensuring that democratic governance remains a central pillar of the regional agenda.

As West Africa continues to navigate political transitions and evolving governance challenges, his commitment to constitutional order serves as a reminder that democracy remains one of the region's most valuable and enduring assets



GUINEA-BISSAU CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER MISSION:

ECOWAS As A Guarantor Of Democracy

The ECOWAS intervention in Guinea-Bissau highlighted the organisation's ongoing role as a guarantor of constitutional order in West Africa.

Political instability in Guinea-Bissau has historically posed challenges for regional governance frameworks, and ECOWAS' response has consistently combined diplomatic pressure with mediation efforts.

Under President Bio's leadership, the approach emphasized peaceful resolution, institutional continuity, and the avoidance of escalation.

The mission underscored ECOWAS' dual identity: both a political union and a crisis management institution.

It also reinforced the expectation that regional stability requires active engagement rather than passive observation.





ECOWAS DEPLOYMENT DECISION ON BENIN:

DEFENDING CONSTITUTIONAL STABILITY

The ECOWAS deliberation on developments in Benin represented one of the most sensitive institutional moments during the chairmanship of Julius Maada Bio.

While Benin has long been viewed as one of West Africa's more stable democracies, emerging security and political concerns triggered high-level consultations within ECOWAS regarding preventive regional responses.

President Bio's approach emphasized caution and coordination rather than escalation. Internal discussions focused on ensuring that any regional response would remain firmly anchored in constitutional legitimacy, proportionality, and collective decision-making.

The deployment considerations were not framed as a punitive mechanism but as a stabilisation tool, designed to deter constitutional disruption and reinforce democratic norms.

Diplomatic sources describe the engagement as a clear demonstration of ECOWAS' evolving doctrine: preventive action where possible, collective enforcement where necessary.

COVER STORY

A VISION FOR A STRONGER ECOWAS

**President Julius Maada Bio's
Agenda for Regional Renewal**

When President Julius Maada Bio assumed the Chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Authority of Heads of State and Government in June 2025, he inherited leadership of a region confronting some of the most complex challenges in its history. The decision was received across West Africa not as routine rotation, but as a moment of recalibration for a region under strain.

ECOWAS had been grappling with three simultaneous pressures: constitutional instability in parts of the Sahel, rising insecurity linked to extremist networks, and declining public confidence in regional institutions. Against this backdrop, President Bio's emergence as chair signaled a shift toward a more assertive and reform-oriented leadership style.

West Africa stood at a crossroads. Democratic governance was under strain in parts of the region. Security threats from violent extremism and terrorism continued to spread across the Sahel. Economic integration remained incomplete

despite decades of effort. At the same time, millions of young people were demanding greater opportunities, stronger institutions, and a more prosperous future.

Against this backdrop, President Bio articulated a bold and forward-looking vision for the regional bloc. Rather than focusing solely on crisis management, he called for a renewed ECOWAS capable of delivering security, prosperity, democracy, and opportunity for its more than 400 million citizens.

In his acceptance remarks, President Bio outlined what would become the defining architecture of his chairmanship: he identified four strategic pillars that would define his tenure as Chairman: restoring constitutional order and democratic governance, strengthening regional security cooperation, advancing economic integration, and enhancing institutional credibility within ECOWAS.



The significance of these priorities was immediately evident. Across the region, governments were grappling with the implications of political transitions, while security challenges increasingly transcended national borders. President Bio recognized that no country could effectively confront these issues in isolation.

What distinguished this moment was not only the agenda itself, but the urgency behind it. ECOWAS, he argued, could no longer function as a reactive body responding to crises after they unfold. It must evolve into a preventive institution capable of anticipating and shaping outcomes.

His leadership approach emphasized dialogue, cooperation, and collective responsibility. Rather than deepening divisions, he sought to rebuild trust among member states and strengthen the spirit of regional solidarity that has long been the foundation of ECOWAS.

Economic transformation also featured prominently in his agenda. President Bio consistently argued that regional integration must move beyond policy declarations to tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens. This meant facilitating trade, reducing barriers to movement, investing in infrastructure, and creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs and businesses.



ECOWAS

SESSION :

Defining The Four-Pillar Doctrine

At a statutory ECOWAS session in mid-2025, President Bio formally articulated what analysts now refer to as the “Four-Pillar Doctrine” of his chairmanship.

These pillars, **democracy, security, integration,** and **institutional reform,** were not presented as abstract goals, but as operational priorities.

Diplomatic sources indicate that President Bio emphasized a key concern: ECOWAS risked becoming institutionally respected but operationally weak. In other words, strong communiqués but limited enforcement capacity.

He therefore called for:

- improved compliance mechanisms
- faster decision implementation cycles
- and stronger coordination between national and regional institutions.

The session marked a turning point in how ECOWAS governance reform was being framed, not as optional modernization, but as survival necessity.



AU MID-YEAR COORDINATION:

Aligning ECOWAS With Africa's Broader Agenda

At the African Union Mid-Year Coordination Summit, President Bio positioned ECOWAS within the larger continental governance architecture. He argued that West Africa's challenges, security, migration, economic fragmentation, were not isolated but interconnected with continental dynamics. A key message from his intervention was the need for synchronization between ECOWAS and the African Union, particularly in:

- **peace and security operations**
- **trade implementation under AfCFTA**
- **and institutional reform alignment**

The speech reinforced ECOWAS' role as a regional pillar within Africa's broader integration project.

OPENING OF THE 68TH ECOWAS SUMMIT:

A Call for Institutional Renewal

A

At the opening of the 68th

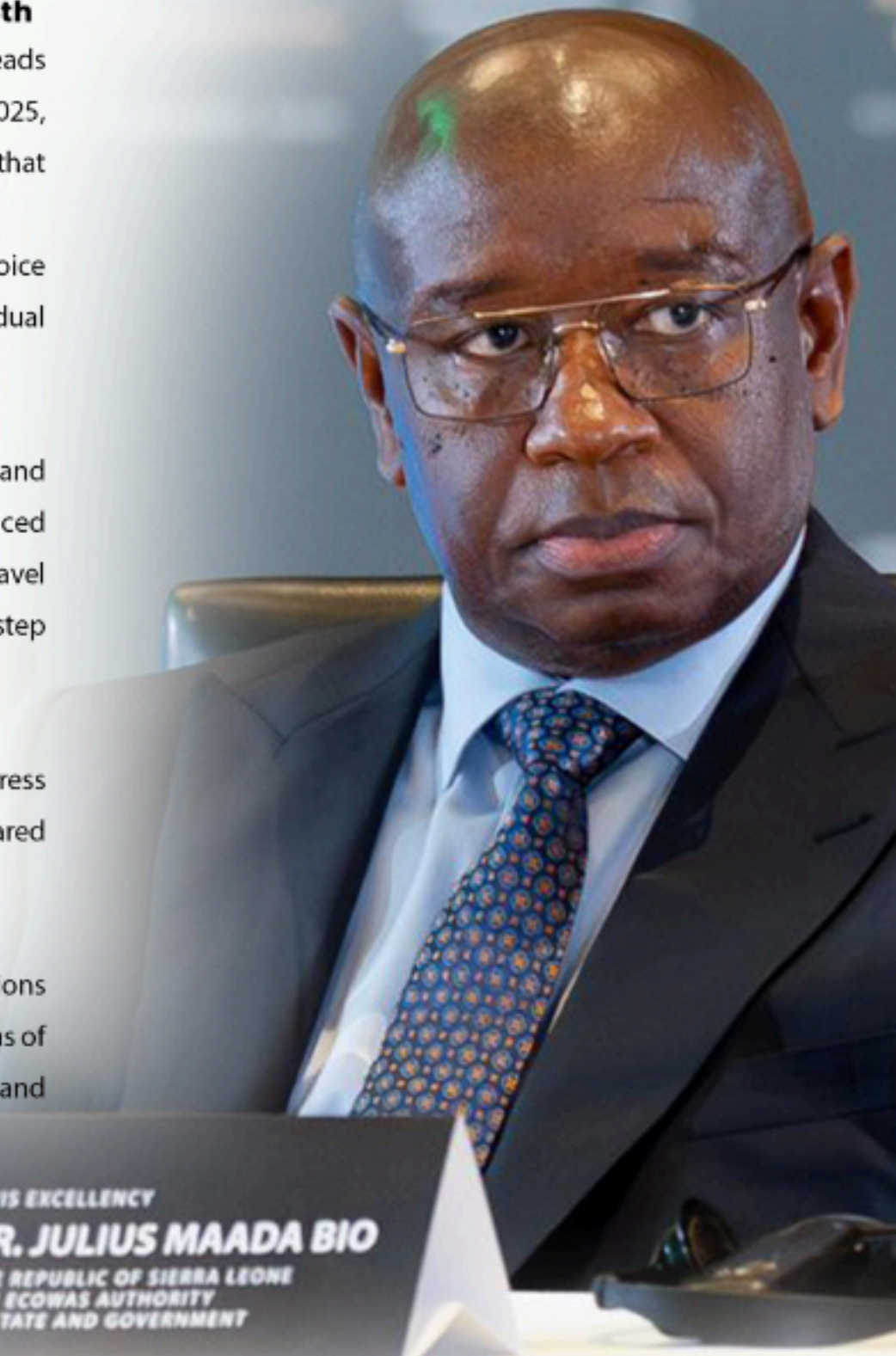
Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in December 2025, President Bio delivered a defining address that blended urgency with institutional reflection.

He warned that ECOWAS faced a critical choice between deepening integration or risking gradual fragmentation.

A central theme of the speech was mobility and economic accessibility. President Bio announced measures aimed at reducing the cost of air travel across West Africa, a symbolic but practical step toward improving regional connectivity.

Beyond policy announcements, the address reaffirmed ECOWAS as a community of shared destiny, not merely a diplomatic forum.

Leaders were urged to move beyond declarations and focus on implementation, particularly in areas of trade facilitation, peace enforcement, and institutional reform.

A portrait of President Julius Maada Bio, a Black man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is seated at a conference table. In front of him is a black nameplate with white text. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

HIS EXCELLENCY
BRIG. (RTD) DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE
& CHAIR OF ECOWAS AUTHORITY
OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

BUILDING PEACE AND SECURITY

Confronting Emerging
Threats Through
Collective Action

Peace and security remain among the most pressing challenges facing West Africa today. From violent extremism and terrorism to transnational crime and political instability, the threats confronting the region are increasingly complex and interconnected. As Chairman of ECOWAS, President Julius Maada Bio has placed regional security cooperation at the centre of his leadership agenda, recognizing that lasting peace is essential for development, investment, and human progress.

His tenure has coincided with growing concerns about instability in the Sahel, where extremist groups continue to exploit weak governance structures, porous borders, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. President Bio has consistently advocated a comprehensive response that addresses both immediate security threats and their underlying causes.



Speaking at international forums including the Munich Security Conference and the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, he called for stronger collaboration between African institutions and global partners. His message was clear: security solutions must be African-led while benefiting from meaningful international support.

One of the most significant themes of his security agenda has been the concept of prevention before intervention. Rather than waiting for conflicts to escalate into crises, President Bio has urged governments and regional organisations to invest in early warning systems, conflict prevention mechanisms, and community resilience.

This preventive approach reflects lessons learned from past conflicts across the continent. By identifying risks early and addressing grievances before they intensify, countries can reduce the human and economic costs associated with instability.



Regional cooperation has also been a defining element of his strategy. President Bio has promoted stronger intelligence sharing, enhanced border security coordination, and greater collaboration among security institutions. These efforts acknowledge the reality that modern security threats rarely respect national boundaries.

Another major focus has been engagement with the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). Recognizing the importance of regional unity, President Bio has worked to encourage dialogue and explore pathways for renewed cooperation between ECOWAS and the Sahelian countries.

His efforts underscore a broader belief that security challenges cannot be solved through isolation. Sustainable peace requires communication, trust-building, and collective action among neighbouring states.

At the Mano River Union Summit and other regional gatherings, President Bio further emphasized the connection between security and development. Investments in infrastructure, education, employment, and social inclusion, he argued, are critical components of long-term stability.

Throughout his chairmanship, President Bio has championed a vision of security that extends beyond military responses. It is a vision grounded in prevention, partnership, and people-centred development.

As West Africa continues to confront evolving threats, his leadership has reinforced the importance of unity and cooperation in safeguarding the peace and security of the region's citizens.

EU–ECOWAS Engagement On Sahel Security: **REDEFINING PARTNERSHIP ARCHITECTURE**



When President Julius Maada Bio met with the European Union

Special Representative for the Sahel in mid-2025, the meeting was framed as routine diplomacy. In reality, it reflected a deeper recalibration of how the Sahel crisis is being understood and managed between ECOWAS and external partners.

At the centre of the discussion was a shared concern: the persistence of instability across the Sahel region despite years of international interventions, security deployments, and development assistance.

President Bio's intervention marked a subtle but important shift in ECOWAS messaging. Rather than focusing exclusively on military containment strategies, he emphasized governance deficits, institutional fragility, and the absence of sustained political dialogue as core drivers of instability.

His position reinforced an emerging ECOWAS doctrine: security cannot be externalised. It must be rooted in regional ownership, coordinated intelligence frameworks, and structured political engagement.

European officials reportedly welcomed the emphasis on a "politics-first" approach, signalling alignment on the need for more comprehensive solutions beyond kinetic security responses.

ECOWAS—AES

Engagement Framework: Navigating A Fragmented Regional Order

One of the most delicate dimensions of President Bio's chairmanship has been managing relations between ECOWAS and the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

Rather than adopting a purely confrontational stance, President Bio has consistently advocated for structured engagement aimed at maintaining communication channels with transitional governments in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

His position reflects a pragmatic recognition: exclusionary approaches risk deepening fragmentation, while dialogue offers a pathway, however complex, toward eventual reintegration.

Within ECOWAS diplomatic circles, this approach has been described as "firm engagement without diplomatic rupture." The objective is not immediate reintegration under pressure, but the gradual rebuilding of trust and institutional alignment where possible.

Burkina Faso Working Visit:

DIPLOMACY IN A TRANSITIONAL CONTEXT

During his working visit to Burkina Faso, President Bio engaged transitional authorities in discussions centered on security cooperation, humanitarian needs, and regional coordination mechanisms.

The visit took place against a backdrop of heightened security challenges in the Sahel, including insurgent activity and displacement pressures.

Rather than issuing ultimatums, the engagement focused on maintaining dialogue channels and exploring areas of mutual interest, particularly in border management and humanitarian coordination.



The visit demonstrated ECOWAS' continued willingness to engage directly with transitional governments, even in politically complex environments.

It also reflected an understanding that long-term regional stability will depend on rebuilding institutional trust rather than severing diplomatic ties.

It also reinforced the expectation that regional stability requires active engagement rather than passive observation.

DAKAR PEACE AND SECURITY FORUM: *The Doctrine Of Prevention Before Intervention*

At the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, President Bio delivered one of the most defining speeches of his chairmanship.

He introduced and reinforced the doctrine of "prevention before intervention," arguing that Africa's security institutions must shift from reactive crisis management to anticipatory governance.

He highlighted structural weaknesses that have historically limited ECOWAS effectiveness, including delayed response mechanisms, fragmented intelligence systems, and inconsistent political coordination.

The Dakar intervention called for:

- **stronger early warning systems**
- **integrated regional intelligence sharing**
- **and enhanced diplomatic mediation capacity**

The speech was widely interpreted as a blueprint for the next phase of ECOWAS reform.

It also underscored the growing alignment between security architecture and governance reform within the regional bloc.

Côte D'Ivoire Engagement: Stability Through Strategic Partnership

The bilateral engagement between President Bio and Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara underscored the importance of West Africa's anchor states in sustaining regional stability.

Côte d'Ivoire, as one of the region's most economically dynamic and politically influential countries, occupies a central position in ECOWAS' integration agenda.

Discussions between the two leaders focused on three core areas: economic cooperation, border security, and infrastructure development.

Final Communiqué of the 68th Ecowas Summit:

CONSENSUS UNDER PRESSURE

The final communiqué of the 68th ECOWAS Summit reflected both progress and persistent tensions within the regional bloc.

Member states reaffirmed commitments to democracy, constitutional order, and economic integration, while acknowledging ongoing security and political challenges. Under the chairmanship of President Bio, the communiqué placed stronger emphasis on implementation mechanisms and accountability frameworks than in previous years.

Behind the formal language, however, lay complex negotiations over how ECOWAS should engage transitional governments, manage security threats in the Sahel, and respond to shifting geopolitical alignments.

The outcome represented a fragile but functional consensus - one that preserved institutional unity while exposing underlying divisions.

Sahel Security Address: Reintegration Over Isolation

In a subsequent high-level intervention on Sahel security, President Bio advanced one of the most politically sensitive positions of his chairmanship: the need for structured reintegration pathways for countries currently outside ECOWAS institutional frameworks.

The position was grounded in a pragmatic reading of regional realities. Prolonged isolation, he argued, risks entrenching instability and weakening regional cohesion.

Instead, ECOWAS should pursue calibrated engagement strategies that balance firm principles with open diplomatic channels.

This approach does not dilute ECOWAS' commitment to democratic governance. Rather, it reframes engagement as a mechanism for gradual alignment rather than immediate compliance.

Within diplomatic circles, this doctrine has been described as "principled pragmatism" - a balancing act between normative standards and geopolitical realities.

Mano River Union Leaders' Meeting:

CROSS-BORDER STABILITY AND SHARED ECONOMIES

The Mano River Union leaders' meeting in Conakry brought together regional heads to address shared challenges across Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire.

President Bio used the platform to emphasize the importance of micro-regional cooperation as the foundation of broader ECOWAS stability.

Issues discussed included:

- **cross-border trade facilitation**
- **security coordination in border communities**
- **and harmonization of development policies**

The Mano River region, historically shaped by conflict and post-conflict recovery, is increasingly being repositioned as a laboratory for regional integration.

President Bio's engagement reinforced the idea that sustainable ECOWAS stability begins with strong sub-regional cooperation mechanisms.

68^e SESSION ORDINAIRE DE LA CONFÉRENCE DES CHEFS D'ÉTAT ET DE GOUVERNEMENT DE LA CEDEAO.

68^a SESSÃO ORDINÁRIA DA CONFERÊNCIA DOS CHEFES DE ESTADO E DE GOVERNO.

14 December 2025
Abuja, Nigeria



DRIVING REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Building a Prosperous and Connected West Africa

Economic integration has been the cornerstone of ECOWAS since its establishment in 1975. Yet despite decades of progress, significant barriers continue to hinder trade, investment, and economic cooperation across the region. For President Julius Maada Bio, addressing these barriers has been one of the defining priorities of his tenure as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.

From his first days in office, President Bio articulated a clear vision: West Africa's future prosperity depends on its ability to function as a truly integrated economic space. With a combined population exceeding 400 million people and abundant natural and human resources, the region possesses immense potential. Unlocking that potential, however, requires stronger cooperation, improved infrastructure, and deliberate efforts to facilitate trade and investment.

President Bio's economic agenda has focused on transforming regional integration from an aspiration into a practical reality. Through engagements at the West Africa Economic Summit, the Oxford Africa Conference, the Africa Forward Summit, and numerous bilateral meetings, he has consistently championed policies that promote regional value chains, industrialization, and private-sector growth.



A key aspect of this vision is the reduction of barriers that impede the movement of goods, services, and people across national borders. While ECOWAS has made significant progress through its Trade Liberalization Scheme and protocols on free movement, challenges remain. President Bio has called for renewed commitment to implementing existing agreements and removing bottlenecks that increase the cost of doing business within the region.

The private sector has featured prominently in his economic diplomacy. Recognizing that governments alone cannot drive economic transformation, President Bio has actively engaged investors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders. His support for the West Africa Integration and Investment Summit reflects a belief that sustainable growth depends on mobilizing private capital alongside public investment.

Under his leadership, discussions on regional integration have increasingly focused on practical outcomes. These include enhancing digital connectivity, expanding transport networks, improving energy access, and creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Such investments are viewed not merely as infrastructure projects but as catalysts for economic growth and job creation.

WEST AFRICA INTEGRATION AND INVESTMENT SUMMIT (WAIS 2026):

THE FUTURE BEGINS

The West Africa Integration and Investment Summit (WAIS 2026) represented the culmination of a year-long diplomatic and economic agenda under the leadership of Julius Maada Bio.

Held under the framework of ECOWAS, the summit brought together political leaders, private sector investors, and development partners to advance a unified regional investment strategy.

The summit focused on unlocking capital for infrastructure, accelerating energy transition projects, and strengthening intra-regional trade systems.

A defining feature of WAIS 2026 was the strong endorsement from global and regional investors, signaling renewed confidence in West Africa's economic trajectory.

Beyond financing discussions, the summit reinforced a central message: ECOWAS is evolving from a political institution into a platform for economic transformation.

For President Bio, WAIS represented the practical expression of his chairmanship philosophy—where diplomacy, security, and economic integration converge into a single developmental vision.



ECOWAS Bank Engagement Following the Money of Integration

In July 2025, President Bio hosted leadership of the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, in a meeting that shifted focus from policy rhetoric to financial architecture.

The central question was simple but critical: how does ECOWAS fund integration?

Discussions centered on unlocking capital for:

- **cross-border roads**
- **energy infrastructure**
- **industrial zones**
- **and digital connectivity**

A key outcome of the engagement was renewed emphasis on blended finance models - combining public funds, development finance, and private investment.

This represented a subtle but important shift in ECOWAS thinking: integration would not be achieved through political will alone, but through structured financial systems capable of sustaining long-term projects.

Tripartite Summit: Guinea, Liberia, And Sierra Leone Align Development Priorities

At the Tripartite Summit involving Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, President Bio participated in discussions aimed at strengthening economic integration and security cooperation among the three neighbouring states.

The summit focused heavily on infrastructure connectivity, particularly roads and border logistics systems that could facilitate trade and reduce transaction costs.

Beyond economics, the discussions also addressed shared security concerns, including transnational crime and borderland instability.

The Tripartite framework is increasingly seen as a practical model for ECOWAS integration - moving from high-level declarations to geographically concentrated cooperation zones.

President Bio emphasized that regional integration must be experienced tangibly by citizens, not only negotiated by governments.





SENEGAL–SIERRA LEONE MINING AND ENERGY TREATY: Resource Diplomacy In Action

A landmark bilateral treaty between Sierra Leone and Senegal marked a significant evolution in the economic diplomacy agenda under the chairmanship of Julius Maada Bio within ECOWAS. The agreement focused on cooperation in mining governance and energy development, two sectors central to West Africa's long-term economic transformation.

Beyond its technical provisions, the treaty symbolized a broader shift toward resource diplomacy, where shared natural wealth is increasingly viewed as a platform for regional collaboration rather than competition. Discussions emphasized transparency in extractive industries, value addition within the region, and coordinated energy infrastructure development to support industrial growth.

Discussions emphasized transparency in extractive industries, value addition within the region, and coordinated energy infrastructure development to support industrial growth. The agreement reinforced the idea that economic integration must be anchored in real productive sectors, not only trade policy frameworks.

CONNECTING WEST AFRICA

Infrastructure, Mobility and the Path to Regional Transformation

Infrastructure has long been recognized as one of the most powerful drivers of economic growth and regional integration. Roads, bridges, airports, ports, energy systems, and digital networks connect people to opportunities and nations to markets. For President Julius Maada Bio, strengthening these connections has been a critical component of his ECOWAS leadership.

Throughout his tenure as Chairman, President Bio has emphasized that regional integration cannot be achieved without modern infrastructure capable of facilitating trade, investment, and mobility. His advocacy has therefore focused on projects that physically connect West African countries while creating new opportunities for economic cooperation.

Among the most notable developments during his chairmanship has been the push to improve regional transportation networks. Efficient transport systems reduce costs, improve market access, and strengthen economic competitiveness. They also foster greater people-to-people interaction, helping to build a stronger sense of regional identity

The launch of the 255-kilometre road project linking communities in Sierra Leone and Liberia stands as a powerful example of this vision in action. More than a transportation corridor, the project represents an investment in regional connectivity, economic growth, and social cohesion. By improving movement between neighbouring countries, it is expected to facilitate trade, increase investment, and expand opportunities for local communities.

President Bio has also championed reforms aimed at making regional air travel more affordable and accessible. For many years, West Africa has been known for having some of the highest air travel costs in the world, creating barriers to business, tourism, and regional integration. Recognizing this challenge, ECOWAS leaders under President Bio's chairmanship adopted measures to reduce passenger taxes and charges across the region. These reforms represent a significant step toward improving mobility and strengthening economic interaction among member states.

Energy infrastructure has likewise featured prominently in the regional agenda. Reliable and affordable energy is essential for industrial development, economic growth, and improved quality of life. President Bio has consistently supported initiatives that expand access to energy and promote sustainable development across West Africa.

Digital connectivity is another area receiving increasing attention. As economies become more technology-driven, access to digital infrastructure has become a prerequisite for competitiveness and innovation. President Bio has encouraged investment in digital systems that support trade, education, governance, and entrepreneurship. The broader significance of infrastructure extends beyond economics. Roads connect communities. Airports connect countries. Energy powers industries.

Digital networks connect ideas. Together, these systems create the foundations upon which modern societies are built. President Bio's infrastructure agenda reflects a simple but powerful principle: integration requires connection. By investing in the systems that bring people and economies together, West Africa can create new opportunities for growth, resilience, and shared prosperity.

The future of regional integration will depend not only on policies and agreements but also on the physical and digital infrastructure that enables cooperation. Through his leadership, President Bio has helped place connectivity at the centre of the ECOWAS development agenda

Liberia–Sierra Leone Road Project:

Infrastructure as The Backbone of Integration

The launch of the cross-border road project between Liberia and Sierra Leone represented one of the most tangible demonstrations of ECOWAS' integration agenda in action. For decades, inadequate transport infrastructure has constrained trade, mobility, and economic interaction between neighbouring states in West Africa.

President Bio described the project as more than a road—it is a physical manifestation of regional unity.



The initiative is expected to significantly reduce travel time, lower logistics costs, and enhance cross-border commerce between the two countries.

It also aligns with ECOWAS' broader vision of infrastructure-led integration, where physical connectivity becomes the foundation for economic transformation.



ECOWAS

ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

AMPLIFYING WEST AFRICA'S VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In an increasingly interconnected world, regional organizations play an essential role in shaping international dialogue and advancing collective interests. As Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, President Julius Maada Bio has worked to strengthen West Africa's presence on the global stage and ensure that the region's priorities are heard in international forums.

His chairmanship has coincided with a period of profound global transformation. Geopolitical competition, economic uncertainty, climate change, technological disruption, and security challenges have reshaped the international landscape. In this environment, effective regional leadership has become more important than ever.

President Bio has approached global engagement with a clear objective: to position ECOWAS as a credible and influential voice in international affairs. Through participation in major international conferences, high-level diplomatic engagements, and strategic partnerships, he has sought to advance the interests of West Africa while strengthening cooperation with global institutions.

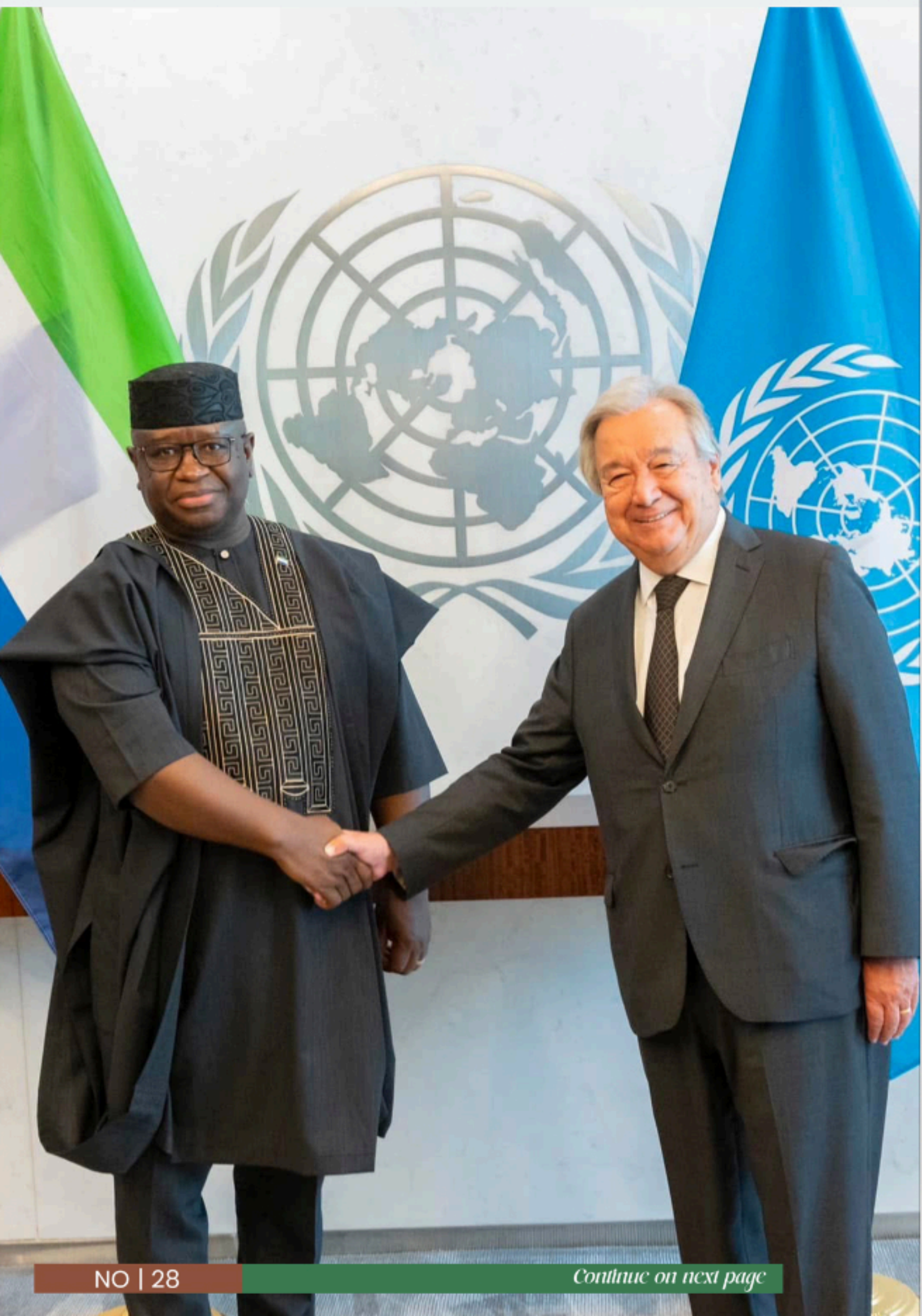
A defining feature of his international advocacy has been the promotion of African-led solutions to African challenges. Whether discussing security in the Sahel, democratic governance, or economic development, President Bio has consistently emphasized the importance of local ownership and regional leadership.

This message resonated strongly during his participation in international security and policy forums, including the Munich Security Conference and the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa. At these gatherings, he highlighted both the opportunities and challenges facing West Africa while advocating greater support for regional initiatives.

President Bio has also utilized international platforms to advance ECOWAS priorities related to economic integration and development. Through engagements with development partners, investors, and multilateral institutions, he has promoted the region as a destination for investment and innovation.

His participation in the Oxford Africa Conference and Africa Forward Summit further demonstrated ECOWAS's commitment to shaping conversations about Africa's future. These engagements provided opportunities to showcase the region's potential while highlighting the importance of youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.







Another important dimension of his global leadership has been strengthening partnerships between ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, and other international organizations. Such partnerships are critical for addressing complex challenges that transcend national and regional boundaries.

Throughout his chairmanship, President Bio has consistently projected a vision of West Africa as a region of opportunity, resilience, and ambition. Rather than focusing solely on challenges, he has emphasized the region's capacity for innovation, cooperation, and transformation.

His international engagements have reinforced the principle that ECOWAS is not merely a regional institution but a strategic actor with an important role to play in global affairs. By amplifying West Africa's voice and strengthening its partnerships, President Bio has contributed to enhancing the region's influence in international decision-making processes.

As the global landscape continues to evolve, strong regional representation will remain essential. Through active diplomacy and principled leadership, President Bio has helped ensure that West Africa's perspectives, priorities, and aspirations are represented on the world stage.

MUNICH SECURITY ENGAGEMENT:

West Africa In The Global Security Architecture

At the Munich Security Conference, President Julius Maada Bio brought West Africa's evolving security crisis into direct dialogue with global power brokers, development partners, and multilateral institutions.

Speaking as Chair of ECOWAS, he presented the Sahel and broader West African security landscape not as an isolated regional problem, but as part of a wider global instability continuum shaped by terrorism, climate stress, and governance fragility.

His message was unambiguous: international responses had too often prioritized short-term stabilization over long-term institutional rebuilding. He called for a recalibration of external engagement, one that strengthens regional ownership while ensuring predictable, sustained international support.

The Munich engagement marked ECOWAS' growing confidence in articulating its security priorities on the global stage, not as a recipient of policy frameworks, but as a contributor to them.



Oxford Africa Conference: West Africa On the Global Stage

At the Oxford Africa Conference, President Bio presented West Africa as a region undergoing structural transformation rather than incremental change. He argued that Africa's development narrative must shift from dependency framing to one of strategic agency and global partnership.

As ECOWAS Chair, he emphasized that West Africa is increasingly positioning itself as a coherent economic space capable of attracting investment and shaping global discourse. The intervention reinforced ECOWAS' growing visibility in international policy spaces, particularly in discussions on governance, climate change, and global economic restructuring.

THE BIO DOCTRINE

Reframing ECOWAS Leadership for a New West Africa

Feature Article by Yusuf Keketoma Sandi ESQ
Press Secretary to the President

The Chairmanship of President Julius Maada Bio has introduced what many observers now describe as a distinct leadership approach within ECOWAS, one defined by pragmatism, preventive diplomacy, and a renewed emphasis on regional cohesion. This approach, increasingly referred to as the “Bio Doctrine,” reflects a shift in how West African leadership engages with the region’s most pressing challenges.

At its core, the doctrine is built on four interconnected principles: prevention over reaction, dialogue over isolation, integration over fragmentation, and institution-building over personality-driven politics.



The preference for dialogue over isolation has been central to his engagement with politically sensitive situations, particularly in relation to transitions and regional disagreements. Instead of disengagement, his approach has prioritized sustained communication and diplomatic channels, even in difficult circumstances.

Integration over fragmentation has defined his economic and political agenda. Whether through trade facilitation, infrastructure development, or mobility reforms, the focus has remained on strengthening the ties that bind ECOWAS member states together. This reflects the belief that fragmentation weakens collective resilience, while integration strengthens shared prosperity.

Finally, institution-building over personality-driven politics underscores a long-standing principle of ECOWAS governance. By reinforcing institutional frameworks, President Bio has sought to ensure that regional stability does not depend on individual actors but on resilient systems and shared norms.

Taken together, these principles offer a coherent framework for understanding his leadership within ECOWAS. They also reflect broader shifts in West African governance, where regional cooperation is increasingly shaped by complex security, economic, and political dynamics. The significance of this approach lies not only in its conceptual clarity but in its practical application across multiple domains - from diplomacy and security to infrastructure and economic reform.



As ECOWAS continues to evolve, the Bio Doctrine provides a reference point for assessing how regional leadership can adapt to emerging realities while remaining anchored in foundational principles. Whether this framework becomes a lasting feature of ECOWAS governance will depend on future developments. However, its imprint on the current phase of regional leadership is already evident.

In a region defined by both immense potential and persistent challenges, the doctrine offers a simple but powerful proposition: that West Africa's future is best secured through unity, foresight, and collective action

A Region in transition

Across President Bio's engagements throughout this one year, a coherent narrative emerges: West Africa is undergoing a period of institutional stress, but also strategic reinvention.

Under the chairmanship of President Julius Maada Bio, ECOWAS has increasingly embraced:

- **preventive diplomacy over reactive crisis management**
- **economic integration over fragmented development**
- **and structured engagement over political isolation**

The journey remains incomplete, and the challenges ahead remain significant. But the direction is clear: ECOWAS is actively redefining its role in shaping the future of West Africa.



A YEAR OF LEADERSHIP

President Bio's Ecowas Engagement Timeline (June 2025 – June 2026)

JUNE 2025 – Assumption of Office

- President Bio elected Chairman of ECOWAS Authority in Abuja
- Sets four strategic priorities for regional agenda
- Addresses West Africa Economic Summit on integration and growth

JULY 2025 – Regional Alignment

- Engagement at AU Mid-Year Coordination Summit
- Progress review on governance, security, and integration
- Strengthening ECOWAS–AU cooperation frameworks

AUGUST 2025 – Diplomatic Engagements

- High-level meetings with regional leaders
- Strengthening bilateral cooperation and stability dialogue
- Focus on institutional coordination within ECOWAS

SEPTEMBER 2025 – Sahel Dialogue

- Working visit to Burkina Faso
- Engagement with AES countries on regional unity
- Emphasis on dialogue and reintegration pathways

NOVEMBER 2025 – Global Advocacy

- Participation in international security discussions
- Calls for coordinated ECOWAS–AU–UN cooperation
- Focus on Sahel stabilization

DECEMBER 2025 – ECOWAS Summit (68th Ordinary Session)

- Key policy announcements on air transport reform
- Reduction in regional travel charges
- Decisions on constitutional governance issues in member states

JANUARY 2026 – Security Consultations

- High-level meeting in Accra on regional security
- Focus on terrorism, borders, and intelligence sharing

FEBRUARY 2026 – Global Security Forum

- Participation in Munich Security Conference
- Advocacy for African-led security solutions

MARCH 2026 – Regional Cooperation

- Mano River Union summit in Conakry
- Engagement on border security and trade cooperation
- Continued dialogue on Sahel reintegration

APRIL 2026 – Peace and Security Diplomacy

- Dakar International Forum address
- Emphasis on prevention before intervention
- Cross-border infrastructure and cooperation initiatives

MAY 2026 – Economic Diplomacy

- Participation in Africa Forward Summit
- Endorsement of regional investment framework

JUNE 2026 – Consolidation Phase

- West Africa Integration and Investment Summit engagements
- Strengthening partnerships with private sector leaders
- Reinforcement of ECOWAS economic agenda

This timeline reflects a year of sustained diplomatic engagement aimed at strengthening

ECOWAS

institutions and
advancing regional
integration.



The Eye of West Africa: President Julius Maada Bio and the Next Chapter of Regional Integration

The first fifty years of ECOWAS were devoted to laying the foundations of regional integration. The next fifty years must be defined by transforming those foundations into lasting prosperity, shared security, and wider opportunity for every citizen of our Community." — President Julius Maada Bio





A New Symbol for a New Era

On 2 July 2026, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) reached one of the defining milestones in its institutional history. As the Community celebrated fifty years since its establishment, leaders from across West Africa gathered in Abuja, Nigeria, for the commissioning of its new headquarters, a landmark that represents far more than a modern administrative complex. Popularly known as the "Eye of West Africa," the new headquarters stands as a physical manifestation of the region's collective aspirations for unity, integration, peace, and shared prosperity.

Presiding over the historic ceremony was His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Chairman of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. At a moment that invited celebration, President Bio deliberately shifted the conversation beyond architecture and symbolism. Instead, he challenged the region to reflect on the true purpose of its institutions and the responsibility of leadership in shaping West Africa's future. His address was not merely ceremonial. It was a strategic vision for ECOWAS at fifty, a call to transform an organisation that has spent five decades building institutions into one that must now deliver measurable improvements in the lives of more than 450 million West Africans.

Celebrating a Legacy While Confronting New Realities

Established in 1975 through the Treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS was created primarily to foster economic cooperation among its Member States. Over time, however, the organisation evolved into one of Africa's most influential regional institutions, extending its mandate to include peacekeeping, democratic governance, conflict prevention, regional security, humanitarian response, and judicial cooperation. President Bio acknowledged these achievements, noting that the Community's accomplishments, from the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and the ECOWAS Passport to peace support operations and mediation initiatives, have fundamentally reshaped the political and economic landscape of West Africa.

He reminded delegates that the region faces increasingly complex challenges that require institutions capable not only of responding to crises but also of anticipating them. Terrorism and violent extremism, unconstitutional changes of government, organised crime, illicit trafficking, climate change, economic instability, food insecurity, and rapid technological transformation have fundamentally altered the operating environment for regional organisations.

In this context, President Bio argued that the effectiveness of ECOWAS would no longer be measured by the number of treaties it adopts but by its ability to deliver practical solutions.

"The people of West Africa are not waiting for promises. They are waiting for results."

This statement captured the central philosophy underpinning his address: institutions derive legitimacy not from their existence but from their impact.

SOLIDARITY BEYOND BORDERS

*Building African Unity
Through Compassion,
Diplomacy and Strategic
Leadership*

STANDING TOGETHER IN TIMES OF GRIEF.

As ECOWAS Chairman, President Julius Maada Bio treats solidarity as a moral obligation, not just diplomacy. When one African nation suffers, the continent shares the burden.

This was shown during his August 2025 visit to Ghana. Planned as part of his ECOWAS tour, the visit took on new meaning after a military helicopter crash killed eight Ghanaians, including the Ministers of Defence and Environment. Instead of postponing, President Bio went to Accra to lay a wreath, sign the Book of Condolence, and meet President John Dramani Mahama. He conveyed condolences from Sierra Leone and ECOWAS, stressing that unity is built through empathy and shared humanity. President Mahama thanked him, noting the visit represented the support of the entire region.

STANDING WITH GHANA ONCE AGAIN

President Bio also expressed solidarity when floods later hit parts of Ghana, causing destruction and displacement. He reiterated Sierra Leone's support and called for stronger regional cooperation on disaster preparedness and climate resilience. His actions reflect the belief that the wellbeing of one ECOWAS state is tied to the whole community.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

For President Bio, solidarity is shown through action. By standing with neighbors during grief and crisis, he has strengthened the human side of regional diplomacy and reinforced ECOWAS as a community united by shared values.



BUILDING THE AFRICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE

A New Platform for African Strategic Cooperation

As global politics shift, President Bio argues Africa must help shape international affairs. In this spirit, he attended the Extraordinary Conference of the African Political Alliance in Lomé, Togo, on 3 July 2026 as ECOWAS Chairman.

Leaders discussed "Africa and the Middle East Crisis: Impacts, Challenges and Strategic Responses." President Bio welcomed the APA, launched by President Faure Gnassingbé, as a platform for dialogue and collective action.

AFRICA MUST SHAPE ITS OWN FUTURE

President Bio urged leaders to treat global crises as chances to build resilience and autonomy. Despite disruptions to food, energy and trade, Africa has the people, resources and institutions to chart its own path. "No external crisis can define Africa's future. Only Africa can define Africa's future."

He called for industrialization, economic sovereignty, AfCFTA trade, investment in tech, and reforms to global institutions to reflect Africa's influence.

FROM REGIONAL INTEGRATION TO CONTINENTAL INFLUENCE

From Regional Integration to Continental Influence

He proposed an African mechanism for geopolitical risk assessment and early warning, and a common African position on international issues to strengthen the continent's voice at the UN and beyond. His vision is a shift from reacting to global events to shaping them.

A LEGACY OF AFRICAN SOLIDARITY

President Bio's missions and engagements show a consistent philosophy: unity, compassion and collective responsibility. Regional integration means standing together in hardship, speaking with one voice, and working for a peaceful, prosperous Africa.

As ECOWAS Chairman, he has worked to strengthen friendships, foster dialogue, and help build an Africa confident in shaping its own destiny.





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You Padi na kitchen

ABOUT LEONE ROCK METAL GROUP

Leone Rock Metal Group (LRMG) was established in Sierra Leone in July 2010. It is one of the largest resource investment companies in West Africa, comprising subsidiaries such as Kingho Mining Company and Kingho Railway & Port Company. LRMG's assets encompass an open-pit iron ore mine in Ferengbeya, Tonkolili, as well as a 192 KM railway and integrated port located in Pepel, Port Loko. Additionally, the company holds ownership of three OGVs within its portfolio.

12 MILLION TONS TRANSITION LAYERS AND 30 MILLION MAGNETITE PROCESSING PLANTS

As part of its expansion effort, in 2024, LRMG constructed a 12 million tons beneficiation plant, mainly processing the transitional Saprolite material. Additionally, a magnetite processing plant, with an optimum capacity of 30 million tons is under development. The first two lines of the magnetite plant, each with a capacity of 10 million tons, have been in operation since the first half of 2025. This has ultimately increase the annual production to approx. 20 million tons.



192 KM RAILWAY AND INTEGRATED PORT

LRMG also possesses a 192 KM railway and integrated port located in Pepel, Port Loko. Over the recent years, the port operations have experienced exponential growth, exporting 36 million tons between 2021 and 2024, with notably exporting approximately 11 million tons solely in 2025. Anticipated haulage will be 20 million tons, this year 2026.

Presently, KRP holds an operational fleet comprising 21 locomotives and more than 500 wagons, each capable of carrying up to 78 tons of cargo. Additionally, the company has recently made significant investments in the rehabilitation & expansion of the rail lines and associated facilities.



Looking ahead, the Bulk Mineral Commodity Port has also seen substantial capacity upgrade, aiming to facilitate the handling & shipping of up to 20 million tons annually. This enhancement is allowing for the handling of six Transshipment vessels (TSVs) daily. Positioning itself as an internationally comprehensive enterprise, LRMG integrates mining, processing, smelting, and steel production within Sierra Leone. This integration spans the entire iron ore supply chain, from extraction at the mine to steel production.



SIERRA LEONE PORTS AND HARBOURS AUTHORITY

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DRIVING TRADE. BUILDING THE NATION.

The port is recognized as the main entry/exit point of cargo and is seen as a key driver of trade and therefore economic growth in Sierra Leone.

OUR SERVICES

- ✓ Cargo Handling & Storage
- ✓ Vessel Berthing & Mooring
- ✓ Customs Facilitation
- ✓ Port Operations & Logistics
- ✓ Security & Safety Management
- ✓ Infrastructure Maintenance
- ✓ Supporting Import & Export Trade



OUR COMMITMENT

We are committed to providing world-class port services that promote trade, create opportunities and contribute to the sustainable development of Sierra Leone.



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