

INTERIM REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNITY COURT OF JUSTICE, ECOWAS 2019

Introduction

The first quarter of 2019 marked an important milestone in the history of the Court's engagement with the citizens, being the first time in its history that it hosted an outreach programme which took it to Sierra Leone and Liberia in March. This is an expression of its renewed desire to deepen stakeholder engagement so that they can fully avail themselves of the benefits of its services. A third and final activity for the year 2019 is planned for Cape Verde in June.

This interim report covers the period January to April 2019 while activities projected to be implemented between May and June have been integrated in the spirit of the Inter-Institutional Memorandum of the President of the Commission that inspired this contribution. In recognition of the peculiarity of the Court as a judicial institution, the report took cognizance of the primacy of its judicial function as the fulcrum for the other activities and which enabled it to;

- Ensure the effective administration of justice;
- Facilitate access to justice;
- Create public trust and confidence;
- Ensure the attainment of peace and security within the community; and
- Contribute to the development of Community Law.

JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES

There was a significant improvement in the number of decisions handed down by the Court in 2019, which increased to 21 compared to the 11 for the corresponding period in 2018. Of the 21 decisions, 16 judgments were handed down while the remaining five were rulings compared to 10 judgments and one ruling for the same period last year. The number of pending cases also increased to 104 compared to 97 for the corresponding period in 2018 even though the number of Court sessions dropped to 34 in 2019 compared to 36 for the same period of 2018. Thirteen new cases were filed as at the end of March compared to 19 for the same period last year although the number of Court processes awaiting translation also increased to 289 from 213.

During the period, the Court also undertook its inaugural outreach programme in Liberia and Sierra Leone between 7th and 23rd March. The campaign enabled the Judges and staff to engage holistically with its diverse stakeholders by engaging in sensitizations, town hall meetings, fora with lawyers and law students, extensive radio and television appearances as well as a judicial dialogue with judges which enabled the delegation to discuss ways of improving synergy in the delivery of justice and the enforcement of the decisions of the Court. Included in the campaign was an advocacy component involving visits to government officials of the host Member States, enabling the delegation to discuss the role of the Court in promoting regional peace and security through the exercise of its human rights mandate and the challenges militating against its effectiveness.

Training with International Committee of Red Cross on International Humanitarian Law

A joint training programme was held in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) between 6 to 7 March 2019 for judges and 20 staff, mainly from the Registry and Research Departments, to improve their appreciation of the ICRC perspective of International Humanitarian Law, known as the law of war or law of armed conflict.

NON JUDICIAL ACTIVITIES

This section focuses on activities such as sensitization/ outreach campaign in Member States and training.

Sensitization Programme in Member States

The court embarked on a comprehensive outreach campaign within the region starting from Sierra Leone and Liberia. The last scheduled campaign for 2019 should take place by June 2019.

Mission to Cote d'Ivoire

The rescheduled sensitization campaign of the Court was held in Abidjan in Cote d'Ivoire from 12 to 18 of February 2019. The mission headed by the Honorable Justice GBERI-BÊ OUATTARA, Vice President of the Court and designed to improve awareness on the existence of the Court, its mission, competence, access, functioning and activities.

Among the activities undertaken were radio and television programmes and a press conference. The delegation also visited senior government officials to discuss issues important for the development of the court. An international conference and radio and television campaigns are planned for the second quarter of 2019.

FINANCIAL

There has been a marked improvement in the financial inflow into the Court. The Court received 19.85 per cent of its total budget of UA16, 270,791 during the first quarter, a substantial improvement on the 2018 inflow into its coffers and achieved a budget performance of 74 per cent for the period.

Of the total budget expenditure of **UA 16,286,791** for the year **2019**, **UA 2,346,649** was committed at the end of the period under review, representing 14.42% of the budget with administration and staff expenses accounting for the 75.33 of the expenditure.

TRAINING

The Court's training plan for 2019 was concluded during the first quarter and subsequently approved by management as part of the Court's capacity building programme for staff in order to prepare them for the challenges of the evolving needs of the Court.

CHALLENGES

The delay in the translation of court processes, occasioned by the shortage of language service staff remains a problem added to the reduction in the number of judges from seven to five and the tenure of the judges.