On Sunday, 4 June, West African leaders met in Monrovia for the 51st Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). On this occasion, they commended the peace efforts of the organisation’s member states whose armed forces have intervened in The Gambia (ECOMIG) and Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), while warning against the multiple threats to the region’s stability. During the summit, at which Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf handed over the reins to her Togolese counterpart Faure Gnassingbé, the heads of state made several decisions. They decided to reduce the number of commissioners from 15 to 9 and to reduce the number of statutory posts in ECOWAS institutions to 17, while asking Commission President Marcel de Souza to extend these reforms to the organisation’s other institutions. In the security field, the ECOMIB and ECOMIG mandates were extended by 3 and 12 months, respectively. The most anticipated decisions, however, related to requests from Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The ECOWAS leaders rejected Mauritania’s request for a special association agreement and asked Mauritania to “submit a request for readmission.” Mauritania was an ECOWAS member until 2000. Tunisia received a favourable response to its request for observer status. As regards Morocco, an ECOWAS observer since 2005, the leaders agreed in principle on that country’s application for full membership. The decision was announced in the absence of Mohammed VI who did not come because Benyamin Netanyahu was present as an invited, special guest. This success of Moroccan diplomacy is only the first step towards membership. The next step consists of examining the legal implications of Morocco’s membership, in accordance with the provisions of the revised ECOWAS Treaty. The technical process might also be lengthy. In any case, five months after Morocco’s integration with the African Union, the 51st summit is opening up a new chapter for the Kingdom, and for the West African regional organisation, while at the same time further demonstrating the failure of the Arab Maghreb Union, which has seen three of its members formally make the decision to move closer to ECOWAS.
For the sixth time, the High-Level Committee on Food Security of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) took stock of the region’s food and nutrition situation. West African leaders met following the meeting of the UEMOA ministers in charge of agriculture and livestock, on 9 June in Niamey, Niger, under the chairmanship of Niger President Issoufou Mahamadou.

In his opening speech, the president recalled the role played by the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) since it provided information and analysis drawn from the food crisis prevention and management mechanism, which served as the basis for response plans. The overall food and nutrition situation in the UEMOA area is good.

The support and emergency plans target some 2.7 million food insecure people (at the crisis and emergency levels), including 600,000 in Mali and 1.3 million in Niger - especially in the Diffa region that is home to a large number of refugees from Nigeria. Structural responses to these recurrent crises were a central concern of the Committee.

Among the priority measures that have been developed in Niger are: increased irrigation and floodplain farming, the diversification and modernisation of rain-fed crops, the preservation of livestock production systems, the sustainable management of land and ecosystems, forest product marketing, the development of rural and urban markets, improved water resource management, and the establishment of farmer’s centre offering a range of support services for farmers. The Committee calls for increased political commitment to mobilise financial resources for the UEMOA Regional Fund for Agricultural Development and to help countries implement structural measures, including their national resilience priorities (NRP-AGIR) and the priorities of UEMOA’s 10-year Programme for Agricultural Transformation (PCD-TASAN). Finally, there are plans to open up the Committee to the ministers responsible for the environment, fisheries and aquaculture.

EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, and Angel Losada, EU Special Representative for the Sahel, and the G5 Sahel Foreign Ministers (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) met on 5 June in Bamako, Mali, to discuss their strategic partnership. They want to move the establishment of the joint armed force forward to fight against terrorism and to secure, among other things, the border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

The European Union has announced that it will contribute EUR 50 million to finance this joint military force, which now numbers some 10,000 soldiers, twice its initial strength. While the main mission of this force will be to fight the region’s jihadist groups, it will also be responsible for fighting illicit flows. “What is also new within the framework of this kind of force, at the African continent level, is that it will also be responsible for fighting trafficking: drug trafficking, human trafficking and all other kinds of trafficking,” said Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop. In a joint statement, both parties recognised “the involvement of young people in the societies of the Sahel” as a priority for their partnership. A second meeting with the youth of the Sahel was held in Bamako from 2-4 June as part of the “Voices of Youth for the Sahel” project. On 5 June, France presented a draft resolution to the UN Security Council authorising the deployment of the G5 Sahel military force to fight jihadists and traffickers in the Sahel. “We cannot let the Sahel become a new haven for terrorists from all over the region,” said François Delattre, France’s representative to the UN. The headquarters of this force will be based in Mali. The G5 Sahel hopes to secure a UN mandate by the end of June. A summit of G5 Sahel countries’ leaders is scheduled for 2 July in Bamako, in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron.

PUBLICATION: STOLEN CHILDHOODS

Save the Children published the first report of an annual series presenting a new index, the End of Childhood Index. This index examines various factors that, together, will put an early end to childhood and prevent children from developing their potential. These include: malnutrition, lack of education, poverty and lack of access to health care, child labour exploitation, extreme violence, child marriage and teenage pregnancy. It ranks 172 countries according to the conditions of childhood, from the most preserved to the most eroded. Six countries in West Africa are classified as the most endangered (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger).
OPINION: MOROCCO UNDERSTANDS THAT AFRICA IS THE FUTURE

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed in principle to Morocco's membership request at its 51st summit in Monrovia, Liberia on 4 June. According to a member of the ECOWAS Commission, “The hardest part is done. Now we have to work on the most complicated part.” Indeed, following this agreement in principle, Morocco and ECOWAS will begin a negotiation process to clarify the legal and technical aspects of membership, which poses significant issues on both sides since Morocco does not border any ECOWAS member countries and is not part of the West African space as defined by the African Union. An article published in the African Business magazine by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC-OECD) analyses the role of Morocco in West Africa and the implications of its future ECOWAS membership. It recalls the strong historical ties between Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa through trans-Saharan trade and a common cultural heritage, as well as the active role played by the Kingdom in the African Union peacekeeping forces and in combating jihadists. However, Morocco’s move shows, above all, that it is continuing its economic projections in Africa. Morocco made a very early decision to invest in Africa, notably in major infrastructure projects such as the Morocco-Nigeria gas pipeline, and became the number one investor in West Africa and the second in all of Africa. The Moroccan strategy is part of a long-term approach that recognises Africa’s place as a “new global growth hub.” Better than the co-operation and trade agreements, membership in ECOWAS will offer Moroccan companies direct access to a market of 350 million consumers, with a regional GDP of USD 1 500 billion (PPP). As an ECOWAS member, Morocco will be part of a free trade area with a common external tariff. It will be a member of an area of free movement of persons with a community passport, which guarantees all citizens of ECOWAS the right to travel without visas and grants them residency rights. The Moroccan economy will undoubtedly attract a large number of sub-Saharan Africans in search of opportunities. Is Morocco really ready to open its doors to the people and products of West Africa?

OPINION: BRIDGING NIGERIA’S FOOD DIVIDE IS A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Inclusive growth was at the heart of the 2017 OECD Forum that was held on 6-7 June in Paris. Drawing on experiences from across the globe, the OECD Yearbook gathers many stories that are food for thought. In its contribution, the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat recalls that Nigeria's food crisis requires structural responses to restore trust and build an inclusive, resilient society throughout the country. The Nigerian crisis reflects the importance of inclusion. What started as a localised Nigerian crisis quickly grew into one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Beyond the immediate humanitarian emergency, the Nigerian crisis requires three long-term response strategies. First, we must focus on bringing peace and security to the Lake Chad area. Secondly, we need to think long-term and across borders. Thirdly, we need to restore trust and invest time and effort into building inclusive, resilient societies.

PUBLICATION: INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC POLICIES, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN BURKINA FASO

This joint study by the OECD Development Centre and the Institut supérieur des sciences de la population (ISSP) is based on four years of fieldwork and data collection among 2 200 households in Burkina Faso. It analyses the effects of migration on the key components of public policy in Burkina Faso and the influence of sectoral policies on migration. Burkinabe emigrants account for between 8-10% of the country's population (about 90% live in Côte d'Ivoire) and remittances in 2015 amounted to 4% of GDP, up from 1% in 2009. If the funds sent by migrants contribute to the development of the country, subsidies paid to agricultural households do not reduce migration outflows. The study concludes that they must merge the objectives of migration policies with those of other sectors in order to make them truly effective.
Of the 1,939 urban agglomerations in the Africapolis database, 290 have a market potential -- the total population living within 40 km of an agglomeration’s centre -- of more than two million people. Only nine of these agglomerations have a population of 2 million inhabitants or more, while 245 have less than 100,000 inhabitants. On the opposite end of this spectrum, only 70 agglomerations have a market potential of fewer than 100,000 people. These isolated agglomerations are mostly located in Chad and Mauritania. The market potential of a region is a good measure of spatial variations in economic density and can be interpreted to determine the economic attractiveness of a region. In denser regions, the intensity of interactions is greater and the spillover effects to surrounding regions are stronger. High market potential is also associated with greater availability and accessibility of services and facilities (hospitals, schools, universities, etc.) generally associated with larger cities. The reality is more complex and market size and economic attractiveness also depend on a variety of features such as: availability of infrastructure, accessibility in terms of time and cost, the extent of economic and social networks and the existence and quality of regulations and trade agreements. Nonetheless, it provides an additional illustration of urban development that cannot be captured by city size alone.

### WHO’S WHO

**FAURE GNASSINGBÉ, PRESIDENT OF TOGO**

On 4 June 2017, Togolese President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé was elected to head the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for a one-year term. He replaces Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and hopes to advance regional integration by improving the region’s free movement of goods and people. “One of the fundamental rights of our organisation is the free movement of goods and people. This is a first step. We know what the reality and the complaints of the people are. We want to ensure that the practices are in full compliance with the texts,” said the Togolese president during a visit to a border crossing between Ghana and Togo on 8 June. Even though Faure Gnassingbé is one of the youngest presidents of the region, he is already serving his third presidential term. Installed in power after the death of his father, Eyadema Gnassingbé, in 2005, he was elected on 24 April 2005 after a controversial election. He was re-elected in 2010 and in 2015, when he won with 59% of the vote against the main opposition leader, Jean-Pierre Fabre. As in 2010, the densely populated and mostly urban south voted for the opposition, while the rest of the country remained loyal to the current president. At the national level, President Gnassingbé is working, in particular, on national reconciliation and a calming of the political climate. Faure Gnassingbé began his political career in 1999 as the deputy of the first district of the Blitta prefecture in central Togo. He then chaired the Committee on External Relations and Co-operation of the National Assembly. His father appointed him Minister of Equipment, Mines, Posts and Telecommunications in 2003. Faure Gnassingbé was born in 1966 in south-eastern Togo, but did most of his studies in France and the United States. After graduating from the Lycée Militaire de Saint-Cyr in France, he graduated from the Paris-Dauphine University with a master’s degree in management. He received a master of business administration (MBA) degree from George Washington University in 1997.