



Mr. Edwin W. HARRIS Jr., GIABA Director general's speech at the opening ceremony of the 41st meeting of the Technical Commission /Plenary, on 30th May 2024, in Pointe Serene, Republic of Senegal

Mr. Alioune DIONE, Technical Advisor and Representative of the Honorable Minister of Finance, Republic of Senegal

Hon. Mambury NJIE
Representative of the President of ECOWAS Commission,

Madam Hafsat Bakari
Chairperson GIABA Technical Commission and CEO Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit

National Correspondents of the GIABA Member States and Head of FIUs,

Heads of others Law Enforcement Agency and Members of the Inter-Ministerial Committee

Representatives of the BCAEO, Central Banks and Observer Groups,

Heads of ECOWAS National Office

GIABA's Technical and Financial Partners,

Member of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor for me and the GIABA Secretariat to welcome you all to this 41st GIABA's Plenary and Technical Commission meeting here in Pointe Sarene, Senegal. As a matter of statutory obligation, our gathering here over the next two days is in fulfillment of our bi-annual statutory meeting where we meet to considered pertinent matters with regards to the adoption of Mutual Evaluation and Follow Up Reports, self-evaluation of our mid-term progress and challenges, and derive strategies that align our operation to the rest of the global network in pursuit of our common goal in fighting transnational crimes .

My special appreciation for our virtual participants for the time dedicated to attending this Plenary at the same time combining work schedules which can be weighty. GIABA appreciates your invaluable participation.

On behalf of the GIABA Secretariat and delegates present here at this 41st Plenary and Technical Meeting, I extend our deepest appreciation and congratulation to H.E. President Bassirou Diomaye FAYE, President of the Republic of Senegal, and the people of Senegal for the dedication to sustain democracy and peaceful transition in our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is an undeniable fact that our world today is more challenged then ever seen in the existence of the human race and as such provides an urgent call that we work collaboratively to prevent crimes that easily add up to the already social, economic, and political despairs we now faced. Hence, it is imperative that we give no room to money laundering, terrorist financing, proliferation financing and other forms of transnational crimes which are enhanced drivers in the already difficult situation we find ourselves in today.

Ladies and Gentlemen and distinguished delegates,

It is with much appreciation that GIABA continues to provide technical and financial support to member States for their compliance to the FATF Recommendations in the region and strive to succeed with its mandate all because of the unrelenting support of the ECOWAS Commission under the dynamic leadership of H.E. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray. This cooperation with the ECOWAS Commission has seen GIABA evolved and is becoming an institution that reflects the aspiration of the ECOWAS Leadership, especially as enshrined in the “ECOWAS of the Peoples 2050 vision: Peace and Prosperity for All”.

In line with the 2050 Vision, Peace, Prosperity and Security can only be possible and sustained when transnational crimes to include money laundering, terrorist financing and other predicate offenses such as corruption, drug abuse and trafficking , fraud and other forms of crimes are dealt with, with the ultimate goal in mind that they are threats to Peace, Prosperity and Security which remain the bedrock of Vision 2050 and this is where GIABA will continue to work with the ECOWAS Commission and members States to send a clear message that Vison 2050 can be more attainable when we together fight all of these crimes which are enablers to the reverse of Vision 2050.

Standing on the joint commitment of both the ECOWAS Commission and the GIABA Secretariat to foster the region’s own efforts to providing protection for West Africa, I hereby reiterate GIABA unwavering support for the Strategic 4X4 Plan formulated by Dr. Touray which leads the Community’s actions for service and programs deliveries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You may recall that on 14th September 2019, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at their extraordinary meeting held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, adopted a political declaration and a regional Action Plan against terrorism. This Action Plan has eight components, and Component Six is devoted to countering the financing of terrorism in the region. In line with GIABA’s mandate, the Heads of States in West Africa tasked the GIABA Secretariat to lead the implementation of Component Six on terrorist financing. GIABA during the first quarter of this year (2024) collaborated with experts in and out of the region and developed an innovative curriculum and delivered a three-week training for trainer of trainers workshops in Abuja for Anglophone speaking countries and in Abidjan for Francophone speaking countries. Follow up to these trainings are ongoing with law enforcement and investigative bodies in member States.

The strategic objective of this project is to address the capacity gaps and build a national coherence in the knowledge base and capacity of countries’ responses to terrorism and terrorist financing.

Given the outcomes of the Mutual Evaluation exercises carried out, it is more evidential that resources are cardinal in supporting our member States’ work on the deficiencies identified in their evaluations. Interestingly, resources at national levels and macroeconomic stability remain

challenged with soaring inflations across the region, hence financial resources now remain a major challenge for most of our members in curbing the deficiencies in their AML/TF/PF regimes. In view of the above, we send a clarion call to our valuable partners to look in the way of our member States with both technical and financial support in their drives to fill the gap identified in their report. Special thanks to the African Development Bank for a \$5M grant to support ten (10) GIABA member States in transition. This project is now operational with the disbursement of the first allotment. We also want to express special thanks to the GIZ for their support to the Union of Comoros and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe Mutual Evaluations and the continue partnership with GIABA for the 2024 Head of Delegations training.

To date, GIABA has completed the Mutual Evaluations of all 15 member States from the ECOWAS region and with the adoption of the Union of Comoros Mutual Evaluation Report will mark the total of 16 out of 17 member States and finally will be completed with the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe Mutual Evaluation which is expected to be adopted in November 2024 bringing a closure to the GIABA second round of mutual evaluation exercise.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In preparation of the next round and solving GIABA human resources gap, we will be completing the recruitment of additional six technical staff in the Directorate of Evaluation and Compliance and two technical staff in the Directorate of Policy and Research while the Directorate of Finance and Administration benefits with three professional staff excluding G - staff being recruited. These recruitments when completed will be a game changer for the secretariat and will automatically relieve current staff who are overloaded.

As I conclude this message, it is important to express that GIABA is worried over the potential risk of losing three of its members, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Burkina Faso, and the Republic of Niger due to their voluntary withdrawals from the Community. As is, the clock is ticking towards January 2024, and it is in this direction that we plead with the leaders of these three countries to reconsider their decision in the interest of regional peace and security. Together we are stronger, together we can build our region and together we can make our region prosperous and safe.

GIABA calls on the ECOWAS Council of the Wise to continue their mediation so that we continue to live together as brothers and sisters, one people and one destiny.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear Attendees,

For this 41st Plenary session, the following documents will be at your disposal for deliberation and subsequent consideration:

- the Summary Activity Report of the Director General,
- Summary of Member States' Annual Activity Reports
- the Report of the Co-Chairs of the ECG,
- Consideration and adoption of the 2nd Round of Mutual Evaluation Report and Follow-up Reports:
 - a. Union of the Comoros
 - Revised Key Issues Document

b. Follow-Up Reports:

- Republic of The Gambia -Revised Key Issues Document
- Republic of Cote d'Ivoire – Revised Key Issues Document
- Consideration and adoption of the GIABA 3rd Round of Mutual Evaluation Process and Procedures
 - Report of the Co-Chairs of the RTMG,
 - Report of the Technical Assistance Group
 - Memorandum on the GIABA Technical Assistance Group Operational Modalities
 - Outcomes of FATF February 2024 Plenary and Working Group Meeting,
 - Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the 41st GIABA Technical Commission / Plenary Meeting

It is my anticipation that your approval of these matters will enable the secretariat preparation for the third round.

Dear Attendees,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At this Plenary I am in no doubt to expect your very best contributions and I wish everyone an excellent participation and trust that your consideration will be forward for the growth and development of the GIABA Secretariat

Obrigado!

Merci!

Thank you!

Mr. Edwin W. Harris Jr.

Director General of GIABA

May 30, 2024