**ECOWAS (MEANING AND HISTORY)**

ECOWAS is an acronym which means Economic Community of West African States. The treaty called   
Lagos Treaty formally establishing ECOWAS was signed on Monday 28, 1975 in Lagos by fifteen (15)   
West African countries. Guinea Bissau later joined to make up 16 countries. The idea of establishing   
ECOWAS was conceived by the Heads of State of Nigeria and Togo in 1973.   
  
**MEMBERSHIP OF ECOWAS**   
The fifteen (15) countries that make up ECOWAS are listed below, also the countries that colonized   
them and their official Language. Its membership was 16 until Mauritania formally withdrew in   
December 2000.   
  
**MEMBERS OF ECOWAS CAPITAL COLONY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **Country and Capital** | **Colony** | **Official Language** |
| 1. | Nigeria, Abuja | Britain | English |
| 2. | Togo, Lome | France | French |
| 3. | Benin Republic ,Porto – Novo | France | French |
| 4. | Ghana, Accra | Britain | English |
| 5. | Cote d’Ivoire, Abidjan | France | French |
| 6. | Liberia, |  | English |
| 7. | Sierra Leone, Freetown | Britain | English |
| 8. | Guinea, Conakry | France | French |
| 9. | Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou | France | French |
| 10. | Guinea Bissau, Bissau | Portugal | Portuguese |
| 11. | Gambia, Banjul | Britain | English |
| 12. | Senegal, Dakar | France | French |
| 13. | Mali, Timbuktu | France | French |
| 14. | Niger, Niamey | France | French |
| 15. | Cape Verde, Praia | Portugal | Portuguese |

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF ECOWAS**1. To promote trade among member states.   
2. To promote free movement of people within the sub-region, without visa.   
3. To promote economic cooperation among member states.   
4. To ensure cultural cooperation e.g. sports, education and arts e.g. WAFU.   
5. To promote peace among member nations e.g. ECOMOG.   
6. To take common stand on world issues e.g. against the then apartheid in South Africa.   
7. To eventually establish a common currency.

8. To enlarge natural resources base of member states.   
9. To enter into joint partnership for the development of transport.   
10. To contribute to and compensate member states that loses economically as a result of their   
membership.

**ACHIEVEMENTS OR BENEFITS OF ECOWAS**   
I. Free movement of people due to the abolishing of visa   
II. It has led to cultural integration through free movement of people.   
III. It has promoted unity among member states e.g. ECOMOG which had helped to maintain   
peace in the former war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone.   
IV. Citizens of member states have the right to settle anywhere in the sub-region.   
V. Establishment of ECOWAS has led to the development of common market.   
VI. Member states are able to trade with each other.   
VII. It has ensured military cooperation in many countries through exchange of ideas, training   
and materials.   
VIII. It has led to the development of international communication among member states e.g.   
roads and telecommunication network.   
IX. It has also helped member states in the promotion of sports e.g. WAFU competition.   
  
**PROBLEMS OF ECOWAS**   
1. Similarity of products: similarity of products limits the volume of trade among member   
states.   
2. Non-payment of due: there is shortage of fund as some member states do not pay their   
dues regularly.   
3. Language barrier: there is the problem of language barrier which retards their activities.   
4. Differences in currency: difference in currency limit the level of trade among member   
states.   
5. Differences in political ideology   
6. Non-implementation of programmes: e.g. common market and common currency.   
7. Allegiance to former colonial masters.   
8. Political instability.   
9. Fear of domination.   
10. Problem of transportation.   
11. Problem of debt burden.   
  
SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS   
I. Diversification of production   
II. Payment of dues   
III. Resolution of programmes   
IV. Common currency   
V. Trade liberalization   
VI. Detach from colonial masters   
VII. Free movement   
VIII. Teaching of modern language e.g. English and French in educational institutions