WAES 2025 DECLARATION

Garki Declaration on Regional Prosperity and Integration Adopted at the West Africa Economic Summit (WAES) Held in Garki, Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria | 21st June 2025

Preamble

We, the Heads of State and Government of West African nations, meeting in Garki, Abuja at the inaugural West Africa Economic Summit (WAES), under the theme "Unlocking Trade and Investment Opportunities in the Region," guided by the principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, and shared prosperity;

Recognising the urgent and indispensable need to deepen intra-regional trade and investment flows;

Acknowledging that our collective prosperity hinges on accelerated integration and that the global economy will not wait for West Africa to fully realize its potential;

Affirming our collective responsibility to leverage our region's abundant natural resources and dynamic youthful population, ensuring that strategic investments match this demographic promise in education, digital infrastructure, innovation, and productive enterprise to drive inclusive economic transformation;

Recalling our shared commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Agenda 2063, as well as the imperative of aligning our national budgetary priorities and policies with these continental goals;

Acknowledging the profound importance of economic alignment and collaboration among all West African states, irrespective of current institutional affiliations, to foster a truly unified and complementary regional market;

Reaffirming our belief in West Africa's inherent capacity for self-development, recognising that the region offers some of the highest returns on investment globally, and that strategic partnerships, particularly with the vibrant domestic private sector, are crucial for mobilising capital within the region;

Deeply aware that sustained peace, security, democratic governance, and regional solidarity are essential for sustainable development, and that collective action is necessary to tackle ongoing challenges including macroeconomic imbalances, climate vulnerability, food insecurity, and geopolitical uncertainties.

Hereby Resolve and Declare as Follows:

1. **Reaffirmation of Commitment to Regional Integration**
   That regional integration is an imperative for West Africa's economic transformation. We acknowledge that existing instruments, such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), the ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card (ENBIC), the Common External Tariff, and the AfCFTA Protocols, must be fully implemented to dismantle tariff and non-tariff barriers and foster seamless trade across our borders.

2. **Establishment of WAES as a permanent, biennial platform for economic cooperation:**

   That WAES shall convene every two years, rotating among member states, serving as a dedicated regional forum for Heads of State, Ministers, and the private sector to strategically promote economic cooperation, dialogue, and facilitate investment opportunities.

3. **Strengthening Intra-Regional Trade and Investment Integration**

   That we will increase intra-regional trade from its current low percentage estimated at about 12-13% to above 50% in the next five years to position West Africa as a competitive intra-regional trade bloc, by:

   - Systematically removing high-tariff and non-tariff barriers and simplifying customs procedures for West African countries over the next five years;
   - prioritising the harmonisation of digital identity systems across West Africa for enhancing intra-regional movement and trade, financial inclusion, and shared prosperity;
   - harmonising trade-related policies, quality standards, and statistical systems across the region over the next five years;
   - facilitating the seamless movement of goods, services, capital, and people across our borders over the next five years; and
   - fully implementing and activating existing instruments such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff over the next five years.

4. **Prioritisation of Food Security and Agribusiness**

   That we will scale up investment in modern agriculture, seed innovation, agro-processing, and sustainable rural development to ensure food sovereignty and reduce our dependence on imports. Accordingly, we will encourage private sector collaboration in creating robust agri-value chains.

5. **Development of Regional Value Chains and Strategic Sectors**

   That we will promote integrated regional value chains, mining, energy (expanding access to affordable, reliable electricity), and digital infrastructure. Furthermore, we encourage strategic investments in ports and logistics, tourism, industrialisation, digital economy, and real estate development, with a view to increasing manufacturing, export competitiveness, and job creation across West Africa.

6. **Driving Infrastructure Development and Ensuring Functionality**

   That we will develop essential infrastructure, including modern road networks, railways, ports, and air transport systems, through innovative financing models and public-private partnerships. In this regard, we shall address administrative and bureaucratic hurdles that impede the effective functioning and full utilisation of existing critical infrastructure projects, such as the West African Gas Pipeline and the West African Power Pool, ensuring they deliver their intended benefits to our economies and citizens.

7. **Empowering Indigenous Investment and Mobilisation of Regional Capital**

   That we will create an enabling environment for West African entrepreneurs, to foster intra-regional investment flows, and establish mechanisms that attract and integrate Diaspora resources into our economic transformation agenda. In this context, we will encourage indigenous private sector investment and domestic resource mobilisation, including remittances, skills, and capital from the West African Diaspora, as the primary engines of regional growth and resilience.

8. **Empowering West Africa's Youth and Foster Innovation**

   That we recognise our youthful population as our greatest asset. We commit to mobilising significant support for youth entrepreneurship and innovation through:

- Investing in skills development and quality education.
- Establishing regional incubators and targeted funding mechanisms.
- Promoting digital infrastructure and enabling technology-driven enterprises.
- Encouraging recognition of standout ventures presented during the Summit's Innovation Expo.

9. **Advancing Women's Economic Participation:**

That we affirm our commitment to creating an enabling environment that empowers women economically. We resolve to dismantle structural barriers that limit their access to finance, markets, and cross-border opportunities, and to mainstream gender-responsive policies in all regional integration efforts.

10. **Enhancement of Implementation and Accountability Mechanisms**

That because effective integration requires strong political will and diligent execution from all levels of government, we will:

- Establish a High-Level WAES Implementation Secretariat, comprising representatives from all West African countries, to rigorously follow up on the resolutions and investment agreements brokered during the Summit.
- Encourage bilateral and multilateral agreements signed at WAES to be implemented with clear timelines, mutual accountability frameworks, and measurable developmental impact.
- Address issues of border harassment and unofficial payments that hinder legitimate cross-border trade and movement, thereby improving our regions business environment and citizens experience.

11. **Fostering a Conducive Environment for Domestic and Foreign Investment:**

That we endorse the establishment of a West Africa Deal Room Platform to facilitate continued matchmaking between governments, private investors (with a particular focus on empowering West African business tycoons), and development finance institutions beyond the Summit. We will therefore review our investment regimes to attract and protect both domestic and foreign investment, leveraging the high returns on investment available in the region through appropriate incentives and mechanisms.

12. **Reiteration of Our Commitment to Economic Diplomacy and Regional Stability:**

That peace, security, and democratic governance are inseparable from economic progress. We will therefore sustain efforts in tackling ongoing security challenges and macroeconomic imbalances that hinder convergence, recognising that a secure and stable environment is paramount for regional unity, economic transformation, and sustainable development. We also agree to strengthen regional institutions and harmonise our fiscal regimes for managing natural resources.

Conclusion

We express our profound gratitude to the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for hosting this milestone inaugural Summit. We commit ourselves to a renewed era of robust cooperation and decisive implementation, where West Africa stands united, coordinated, and resolute in unlocking its full economic potential for the benefit and shared prosperity of all its people.

We endorse the resolutions in this Declaration with the conviction that a prosperous West Africa is possible—if we act together, boldly and now.

We adopt this Declaration, formally titled **The Garki Declaration**, as the foundational policy and cooperation framework for economic integration, trade expansion, and sustainable development in West Africa.

Adopted this 21st Day of June 2025,
In Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.