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1. **On 30 July 2018, Lomé hosted the joint summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] and ECCAS [Economic Community of Central African States]. Why this summit?**

I believe that this totally new initiative of President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe answers simultaneously a real need and universally shared urgency for: “security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism”. All his fellow ECOWAS and ECCAS heads, particularly President Ali Bongo-Ondimba, understood that the security challenges constitute a danger for our development efforts. It was important to safeguard the great public community good: peace.

2. **How did the summit go? What were the high points?**

All in all, this joint ECOWAS-ECCAS summit on “security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism” went very well, to everyone’s great satisfaction. The summit was marked by some high points, including:

- **Adoption of the Lomé Declaration** on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the ECOWAS-ECCAS space;
- **Commitment to establish and strengthen**, at national and regional levels, **early warning and rapid crisis-response mechanisms**;
- Appeal of the Heads of State and Government for the African Union to seek, together with the United Nations, the ways to lift the arms embargo imposed on the government of the **Central African Republic**;
- Reaffirmation of the commitment by **all the participating parties of the Agreement of 31 December 2016** to respect the only framework capable of leading to transparent and peaceful elections in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**.
- Establishment of **mutual aid and judicial cooperation procedures** between the States with a **Cooperation Agreement on criminal police matters** scheduled to be signed by the designated Ministers before the end of 2018;
- **Utter condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups** as well as of **all kinds of illicit trafficking** by terrorist and mercenary groups operating in the Sahel from Southern Libya.

Reaffirmation by the Heads of States and Government of their **determination to prevent and fight against terrorism and violent extremism** particularly through the involvement of religious and community leaders, women, education system players and other relevant civil society groups in the development and implementation of the deradicalization, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconciliation programmes.

3. What was the Togolese Republic's specific contribution during the summit discussions?

Togo prepared and coordinated the summit, particularly from the experts' session to the ministerial session. So it isn't a matter of assessing our specific contribution since the ECOWAS-ECCAS countries made an enormous contribution.

4. What are Togo's proposals for winning, in ECOWAS and ECCAS, the fights against terrorism and piracy at sea?

We had shared objectives, those linked to promoting peace, security, stability and fighting against terrorism and violent extremism. So the Head of State personally advocated succeeding in this challenge with the **Adoption of the Lomé Declaration**.

5. What are the important decisions to take on board from this summit? What concretely can we expect next?

The **Adoption of the Lomé Declaration** by the Heads of State and Government very clearly expresses all the ECOWAS and ECCAS States' strong determination for and commitment to strengthened cooperation and a pooling of technical resources in intelligence and police and judicial logistics.

Obviously, to ensure the monitoring of the implementation of the decisions of the Joint Lomé Summit, the Heads of State and Government undertook commitments. For example, to:

- Set up a **Ministerial Monitoring Committee** for the implementation of the decisions.
- **To meet every two years** alternately in the two Communities, to take stock of the implementation of the commitments contained in the Lomé Declaration. However, they agree **to hold consultations every year in the margins of the African Union's January ordinary summit**.

6. On 31 July 2018, the 53rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Conference also took place in Lomé. What were its major objectives?

The 53rd Ordinary Session to which you refer had, *inter alia*, the major objectives of taking stock of the security situation in the subregion; the reports of the Presidential Task Force on the ECOWAS single currency; report of the ECOWAS Facilitators on the situation in Togo; an update on the presidential election in Mali; and finally the election of the new ECOWAS president.

- 7. This 53rd session marked the end of President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe's term of office as ECOWAS President. What achievements were made during this mandate?**

Everyone knows what they are! Under the Togolese ECOWAS presidency and thanks to HE M. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe's determination, the long political crisis in Guinea Bissau was successfully resolved with the appointment of a consensual Prime Minister, Aristides Gomes; formation of an inclusive government, re-opening of the National People's Assembly, and organization of the general election on the 20 November 2018.

Currently, all Guinea Bissau's institutions are functioning to the great satisfaction of this brother people and all the ECOWAS countries.

In addition, there has been the institutional reform of the whole ECOWAS Commission, today led by the Ivorian, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou and 16 new commissioners.

Quite obviously, under the Togolese ECOWAS presidency, the Head of State made headway with the integration of our community's peoples thanks to the fact that both people and goods now genuinely enjoy freedom of movement.

- 8. In two days, 30 and 31 July 2018, President Faure Gnassingbe had to manage three important summits: the Joint ECOWAS-ECCAS summit, the 20th Extraordinary Summit of WAEMU [West African Economic and Monetary Union] and the 53rd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Conference – a feat lauded, *inter alia*, by President Buhari of Nigeria, to whom President Faure Gnassingbe had passed the baton for the ECOWAS Presidency. What benefits has Togo drawn from this feat?**

First of all, we must pay tribute to President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe's vision and pragmatism in the organization of the three summits.

Secondly, as you are aware, one of the Head of State's priorities is to restore to our capital Lomé the stature of gateway city for international meetings. Obviously it is not only a diplomatic success, but also an economic and social one for Togo to the extent that the three summits significantly boosted economic activity; every sector of activity gained huge benefit from these great events. A few hours afterwards, a number of economic players were telling us this.

As you noticed over the two days, our compatriots helped make a success of these summits.

- 9. Lomé now stands out as a great African political capital. It was in Lomé, on 11 July 2000 that the African Heads of State and Government signed the Constitutive Act which created the African Union. In Lomé too, on 30 July 2018, the ECOWAS-ECCAS summit, a first, was held during which the two Regional Economic Communities met. Then there were WAEMU's 20th summit and the 53rd ECOWAS summit we talked about. Prior to that, from 10 to 15 October 2016, on President Faure Gnassingbe's initiative and under the African Union's auspices, Lomé hosted the African Union's first extraordinary summit on "maritime security and safety and development in Africa". Do the Togolese government and president want to make Lomé one of the major African**

conference venues? If they do, what efforts in terms of infrastructure and administrative organization have been made to support this?

Lomé has historically been recognized as an essential international diplomatic centre. Over the past few years, we have hosted more than ten international conferences. Every time, the Head of State and his government work to ensure the complete success of all these events (...) support for the hospitality sector, upgrading of the road infrastructure, modernization of the telecommunications sector, ease of obtaining visas, etc.

10. To date, the conferences in Lomé have been above all political. Why doesn't the Togolese private sector take advantage of the new infrastructure to also step up the number of major conferences, seminars and forums in Lomé, in the private sector, which would have many positive externalities for Lomé's economy and foreign currency earnings in Togo?

There have also been economic conferences (...) for instance last summer's AGOA Forum [African Growth and Opportunity Act] and WAEMU's 20th summit. Of course, the government is constantly working with the private sector to organize more economic events.

11. As your country's Foreign Minister, you were the linchpin for the three summits in two days, 30 and 31 July 2018, in Lomé. What difficulties did you encounter? How did you and your team overcome them?

There weren't any major difficulties! In fact, under the Head of State's leadership, the Togolese foreign ministry is duty bound to achieve results. And, secondly, over the past few years, Togo had already organized several international conferences in Lomé and so our organizational capability was fully operational.

12. You are an academic who found himself at the head of his country's foreign ministry, like Henry Kissinger in the USA. How did the academic adapt to his new job? Do you still find time to step back and think deeply about the problems of Togo and Africa? How do you see this continent's future, in the competitive environment imposed by globalization?

I'd like first to thank the President of the Republic for his vision of a pragmatic and bold foreign policy, and also for his trust. As you said, I'm and I remain an academic (...). Combining theory with practical action is an everyday reality for the academic that I am, convinced that the Africans themselves have the key to our continent's development.