

ECOWAS summit undermined by Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso forming confederation

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An extraordinary session of ECOWAS Heads of State hosted by Nigeria's President and Chairman Bola Tinubu in Abuja, Nigeria on February 24, 2024. (File photo by AFP)

Abuja, July 7 (RHC)-- The military leaders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso military have formed a new confederation, undermining the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The ECOWAS Heads of State and Government for validation summit is scheduled to take place in Abuja, Nigeria on Sunday. However, the traditional regional bloc linked to Western countries is facing an unprecedented challenge.

The bloc had suspended Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali after their respective military takeovers, which occurred in July 2023, September 2022 and August 2021. On January 27, 2024, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger announced their plan to withdraw from membership of ECOWAS after reconciliation efforts with the bloc failed to return the trio.

The three military-led West African nations blame ECOWAS for their withdrawal, saying the Western-led group is becoming a threat to its members, accusing former colonial powers France, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States of interference in their affairs

In an undermining move, the military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger held a joint summit in Niamey, the capital of Niger on Saturday. The event marked the first joint summit between Niger's General Abdourahmane Tchiani, Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traore, and Mali's Colonel Assimi Goita since the trio came to power in their countries in successive coups.

Speaking at the summit, Tchiani called the 50-year-old ECOWAS "a threat to our states," declaring the formation of a new confederation of three Sahel states. "We are going to create an AES of the peoples, instead of an ECOWAS whose directives and instructions are dictated to it by powers that are foreign to Africa," Tchiani said.

Traore accused foreign powers of seeking to exploit African countries. The trio has regularly accused the West of meddling in ECOWAS. "This summit marks a decisive step for the future of our common space. Together, we will consolidate the foundations of our true independence, a guarantee of true peace and sustainable development through the creation of the 'Alliance of Sahel States' Confederation," Traore wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"The AES (Alliance of Sahel States) is full of enormous natural potential which, if properly exploited, will guarantee a better future for the people of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso."

The three countries, with a combined population of 72 million, are not only expected to form closer economic ties, but also, to cooperate on the security issues affecting them.

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