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COVID - 19: ECOWAS expresses its solidarity to Nigeria through two food donations for the most vulnerable households

Faced with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, which is exacerbating humanitarian challenges in Nigeria, the ECOWAS Commission has expressed, this Saturday August 22, 2020, the region's solidarity to the Government and People of Nigeria.

This regional solidarity has been demonstrated through two food donations of a total quantity of **3,999** tons of cereals comprising of millet and sorghum. The first donation consists of **1,196** tons of cereals, was financed by the Humanitarian Emergencies Fund of the ECOWAS Commission. The second donation was of **2,803** tons of cereals, was funded after a joint decision of ECOWAS and European Union by the unallocated resources of the Regional Food Security Storage Support Project.

Giving a remark on behalf of the President of the ECOWAS Commission **H.E Jean-Claude Kassi Brou** during the event which took place at the Grains Depot, Hotoro, Kano, Nigeria, the Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources of ECOWAS Commission **Mr. Sékou Sangaré.**, reiterated the solidarity of the ECOWAS Commission and that of the other Institutions of the Community to all suffering and demised citizens resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic.

Extolling Nigeria's regional leadership at the time of the pandemic and its enduring partnership with ECOWAS for a more integrated West Africa, Commissioner Sangaré said: "saving human lives also means giving food to people affected not only by the Coronavirus, but also providing food for our brothers and sisters, our parents affected by terrorism and banditry, violent conflicts and climate change as most of the women and children have been forced to flee their villages to settle further very often in extreme poverty circumstances"

Saluting the Management of the Food and Strategic Reserve Department of Nigeria, for its cooperation and professionalism, Commissioner Sangaré thanked the technical and financial partners including the European Union (EU), the French Development Agency (Afd), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the quality of assistance provided recurrently to ECOWAS and for their regular and diversified support towards the operationalization of the Regional Food Security Reserve as well as the resilience and humanitarian action programs.

Also speaking at the event, Nigeria's Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Madam **Hajia Sadia Umar Farouq** while thanking the ECOWAS Commission for its timely interventions in the distribution of humanitarian

and relief materials, disclosed strategies put in place to realize the vision of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty within the next ten years.

Similarly, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. **Zubairu Dada** maintained that the donation demonstrates the responsibility of ECOWAS in the sustenance of the Community's regional socio-economic agenda, stressing that Nigeria appreciates the solidarity displayed and would continue to work in support of the ECOWAS' regional agenda.

On his part, the Minister of State His Agriculture and Rural Development **Alhaji Mustapha Baba Shehuri** stated that the donations will be adequately distributed while giving the assurance that the stock to be handed on would be replenished in due course.

The Representatives of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the French Ambassador to Nigeria **Dr. Abubakar Suleiman** and **Mr. Stephen Malaussene** respectively pledged continuous support for Nigeria's food security needs while maintaining consistent collaboration with ECOWAS.

The governor of Kano State **Alhaji Abdullahi Umar Ganduje** who was represented by the Commissioner for Higher Education **Dr. Mariya Mahmud Bunkure**, espoused the strides of the state government in the war against Covid-19 by evolving preventive, curative and palliative strategies. She expressed the gratitude of the people of Kano State for the assistance received from ECOWAS.

A sustainability Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ECOWAS and the government of Nigeria after the handover of the donated items at the instance of Nigeria's Ambassador to ECOWAS, Amb Musa Nuhu, among other dignitaries.

The donated grains were taken from the stocks in the ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve, partly warehoused with the Food Strategic Reserve Department (FSRD) and will be distributed free of charge to the households mostly affected by the humanitarian situation in the country; Also helping them to cope with the multiple crises while safeguarding their livelihoods.

The donations complement the multidimensional support that ECOWAS has provided to Nigeria since the advent of COVID -19 in the country on February 27, 2020. They are also directed at the most vulnerable populations living in Burkina Faso, the Republic of Niger, the Republic of Mali and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The ECOWAS Humanitarian Policy aims to prevent, mitigate, and provide durable solutions to the complex emergencies and its effects, including natural and man-made disasters in the region. It complements the ECOWAS Disaster Risk Reduction Policy which focuses on disaster risk reduction through the design of interventions aimed at reducing risks as an obstacle to development.

The ECOWAS Commission has also been supporting the region through its Humanitarian Emergency Fund and the financial support of the EU, within the framework of the Regional Food Security Storage Support Project.

Established on February 28, 2013 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, by ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, the Regional Food Security Reserve aims, to complement the efforts of Member States to provide diversified rapid food and nutritional assistance.

**For more information and updates on COVID-19 across the West African Region,
visit our website: <https://www.ecowas.int/covid-19/>**

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