ENGLISH EDITION

FWS NEWS & EVENTS

The FWS Institutional Bulletin

NOVEMBER EDITION

7 NOVEMBER 2026

EDITORIAL

Regional Cooperation and the Responsibility to Build

Regional cooperation remains one of the defining questions of Africa's future. Across the continent, societies face challenges that cannot be adequately addressed within national boundaries alone. Economic transformation, peace and security, infrastructure, human mobility, education, and technological development increasingly require institutions capable of coordinating action across borders.

Yet regional integration cannot be measured solely by treaties, summits, or institutional declarations. Its deeper significance lies in the opportunities it creates for people, the confidence it inspires among citizens, and its capacity to respond to their practical needs.

West Africa illustrates both the importance and the complexity of this challenge. Political tensions, institutional disagreements, economic disparities, and changing regional relationships have renewed fundamental questions about the purpose and future of cooperation. These circumstances invite serious reflection on how regional institutions can strengthen their legitimacy, effectiveness, and connection with the societies they serve.

For Famuya Wale So, these questions belong to a broader concern: how knowledge, public policy, and institutional responsibility can contribute to human progress. Regional integration should be understood not simply as an arrangement among states, but as a long-term undertaking involving societies, communities, enterprises, and future generations.

In this edition, our Publication in Focus is An ECOWAS of the People: Reforming Regional Governance and Rebuilding the West African Community. The book contributes to this discussion by examining the possibilities for renewing regional governance and placing people more firmly at the center of West Africa's shared future.

Beyond this featured publication, FWS News & Events continues its commitment to presenting significant developments with attention to their broader implications.

Our purpose remains consistent: to encourage informed understanding, responsible judgment, and constructive engagement with the challenges shaping our societies.

IN THIS EDITION

02 / Publication in focus

03 / The Dangote Shift

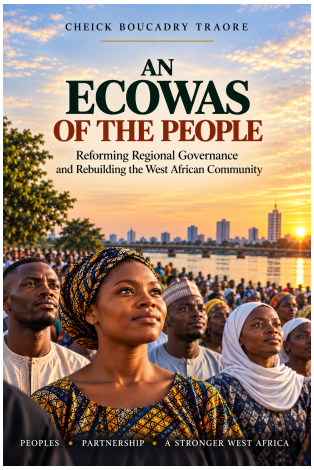
04 / Gold · 05 / WTO · 06 / FWS

PUBLICATION IN FOCUS

AN ECOWAS OF THE PEOPLE

Reforming Regional Governance and Rebuilding the West African Community

By Cheick Boucadry Traore



West Africa stands at a critical juncture in its regional integration journey. The challenges confronting the Economic Community of West African States raise fundamental questions about the future of regional cooperation, democratic legitimacy, institutional effectiveness, and the relationship between regional organizations and the people they are intended to serve.

An ECOWAS of the People examines these questions through a vision of institutional renewal. Rather than abandoning regional integration, the book argues for reforming its foundations, restoring public confidence, and rebuilding a West African community grounded in the aspirations and interests of its citizens.

At the heart of the work is a central proposition: the future of regional integration must move beyond cooperation among governments toward a community in which people are genuine participants and beneficiaries.

The book invites readers to consider how West Africa can overcome fragmentation, strengthen regional governance, and renew the foundations of a shared future.

Why it matters for FWS

Regional integration is not merely a diplomatic arrangement. It concerns mobility, economic opportunity, institutional accountability, peace, and the prospects of future generations. The book contributes to FWS's broader commitment to connecting strategic understanding with meaningful institutional and societal transformation.

Questions for Reflection

- What would make regional integration more meaningful in citizens' everyday lives?
- How can regional institutions strengthen public trust and accountability?
- What responsibilities do citizens, communities, and institutions share in building West Africa's future?

Explore the book on the FWS website >

AFRICAN & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Energy and Supply Chains: The Dangote Shift

Dangote's investments in refining and petroleum distribution could reshape African fuel trade beyond 2026, connecting expanded production in West Africa with a growing infrastructure presence in East Africa.

Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote, who built the Dangote Refinery in Lekki, Lagos—Africa's largest oil refinery and the world's largest single-train refinery—launched a $1.6 billion initial public offering (IPO) in September to help finance its expansion. The planned increase would bring processing capacity to 1.4 million barrels per day, more than double its original capacity of 650,000 barrels per day. The expansion to 1.4 million barrels per day remains planned rather than operational.

On October 21, Aliko Dangote announced that his company had acquired approximately 25% of Kenya Pipeline Company, extending its presence in petroleum transport infrastructure in East Africa. The announcement adds a distribution dimension to the group's refining ambitions.

The investments also reflect Dangote's stated belief in African-led development. "Nobody can make Africa great but us," he told BBC Focus on Africa, urging Africans to take responsibility for the continent's future. His expansion plans give practical expression to that conviction: mobilising capital, building industrial capacity, and strengthening the infrastructure through which African economies trade.

Dangote Industries > Reuters / IPO > Reuters / Kenya > BBC Africa / KenyaMOJA >

Dangote's call for African responsibility resonates with a conviction expressed by Cheick Boucadry Traore:

> *"Africa's future will not be built on prescriptions from international institutions, nor by copying models of governance unsuited to African realities. It will be built by brave and honest African women and men."*
>
> **— Cheick Boucadry Traore**

Why it matters for FWS

Together, greater refining capacity and stronger distribution networks could reduce reliance on refined fuels imported from outside Africa and expand trade between African economies. Against the backdrop of conflicts in the Middle East, more diversified regional supplies could also reduce exposure to some long-distance shipping and logistics disruptions. These are potential benefits, dependent on projects being delivered and supplies reaching their intended markets.

African refining does not remove exposure to global crude prices, feedstock availability, or transport risks. For FWS, the essential question is whether these investments produce more reliable supplies, competitive prices, productive employment, and opportunities for local enterprises.

The longer-term significance will therefore depend on effective regulation, fair access to infrastructure, and the capacity to translate industrial investment into broader regional resilience.

On November 4, 2026, Dangote announced a US$2.5 billion project at Walvis Bay, Namibia, comprising fuel storage and a regional pipeline network, both still to be built.

AFRICAN & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Africa's Gold: Building the Capacity to Keep More of Its Wealth

Africa's gold producers are pursuing a broader strategy to turn mineral wealth into domestic economic strength. Alongside efforts to curb smuggling, governments are investing in refineries, strengthening official trading channels, and developing systems to track gold from its source. The ambition is to retain more processing income, technical expertise, and public revenue within African economies.

The scale of undeclared trade illustrates the challenge. SWISSAID estimated that at least 435 tonnes of gold were smuggled out of Africa in 2022—worth approximately $31 billion at the prices used when its study was published in 2024. This represents the value of undeclared gold flows, rather than an equivalent loss of government tax revenue.

Building Refining Capacity at Home

Burkina Faso inaugurated its first gold refinery, Raffinor-BF, on September 28, 2026, presenting domestic processing as an instrument of economic sovereignty. Ethiopia followed on October 10 with the inauguration of a precious-metals refinery in Addis Ababa, a partnership between Ethiopian Investment Holdings and Sam Precious Metals. These investments seek to expand the capacity to process and certify gold within the continent.

Ghana is connecting domestic refining to export rules. Since September 1, self-financing aggregators purchasing gold doré under approved offtake arrangements have been required to refine it locally before export. The measure targets partially refined gold and seeks to retain more processing activity in Ghana.

Securing Trade and Tracing Its Origins

Refineries form part of a wider institutional response. Ghana's GoldBod provides a central framework for regulating artisanal and small-scale gold trading. In July 2025, President John Dramani Mahama inaugurated a task force drawing on national security, police, and military personnel to enforce gold-trade rules. Informants providing information that leads to recoveries can receive 10% of the value of seized gold or cash.

Tanzania has also reported enforcement operations, including the seizure of approximately 4.4 kilograms of illegally traded gold valued at 1.238 billion Tanzanian shillings. In Kenya, President William Ruto has announced plans to require domestic processing and give the central bank priority in purchasing locally mined and processed gold. These Kenyan measures remain announced plans rather than confirmed, fully implemented arrangements.

Traceability and accurate valuation are equally important. Ghana's GoldBod is developing a national gold-tracking system, while procurement records identify a planned ISO-certified national assay laboratory. These initiatives aim to strengthen oversight of gold's origins and improve the verification of its purity and value. Their development should be distinguished from completed nationwide deployment or certification.

SWISSAID >
Reuters / Ghana >
Business Daily / Kenya >
Burkina Faso / Gouvernement >
Ghana / Presidency >
GoldBod / Traceability >
Ethiopian Investment Holdings >
The Citizen / Tanzania >
GHANEPS / Laboratory >

Why it matters for FWS

These developments reflect a strategic ambition shared with Africa's expanding energy-processing capacity: turning resource ownership into productive capability. Local refining can retain processing income, support skilled employment, and strengthen the institutions through which mineral wealth contributes to national development.

Success will depend on transparent purchasing, credible traceability, environmental protection, and accessible formal markets for artisanal miners. Regional cooperation on customs, certification, and information sharing can help prevent illicit trade from shifting across borders. The lasting measure of progress will be how effectively these investments improve public revenues, livelihoods, and opportunities for African communities.

GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS

Global Trade, Shared Rules: The Institutional Test Facing the WTO

The World Trade Organization faces a test of its ability to sustain cooperation in a changing global economy. At its General Council meeting on October 5–6, 2026, members examined institutional reform, dispute settlement, and outstanding trade negotiations. The discussions highlighted a central challenge: translating commitments to multilateral cooperation into practical results.

Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala called for more concrete reform proposals. Members emphasized development concerns and the need to strengthen the organization's negotiating function. Smaller delegations also raised a practical obstacle to effective participation: overlapping meetings and limited resources can constrain their ability to influence decisions.

Reforming Institutions for a Changing Economy

The agenda extends from longstanding agricultural negotiations to digital trade and artificial intelligence. Members discussed arrangements for electronic commerce, while differences remained over their legal and institutional foundations. Reform discussions are continuing; they should not be mistaken for an agreed overhaul of the organization.

The stakes extend beyond the negotiating room. In a September analysis, WTO Chief Economist Robert Staiger explained how predictable commitments, transparency, and dispute settlement help sustain confidence in international trade. His assessment also acknowledged uneven benefits: the least developed countries still account for less than 1% of global trade.

For these economies, maintaining shared rules must go alongside efforts to overcome the barriers that prevent businesses and communities from participating. Institutional effectiveness depends both on the credibility of commitments and on countries' capacity to use them.

WTO / General Council >

WTO / Chief Economist >

Why it matters for FWS

Building productive capacity and retaining more value from natural resources require an international environment in which countries can trade with confidence. Transparent rules, credible mechanisms for resolving disputes, and meaningful participation in negotiations can help turn domestic investment into lasting economic opportunity.

For African countries, regional integration can strengthen both commercial capacity and collective influence in global institutions. The responsibility is twofold: develop institutions at home that serve citizens effectively, and help shape international institutions that are responsive to different development needs. The measure of reform should be its ability to make cooperation work in practice—for producers, workers, businesses, and communities.

INSIDE FWS

Our Areas of Work

Famuya Wale So connects inquiry, public decision-making, the circulation of ideas, and the development of human capabilities. Five complementary areas help readers navigate this work.

Strategy & Policy

FWS examines the choices shaping societies over the long term. Its approach brings evidence, historical context, and foresight to questions of governance, economic transformation, security, technology, and the responsibilities owed to future generations.

Explore Strategy & Policy >

Research

Understanding a problem is the first step toward addressing it. FWS's research agenda spans institutions, education, economies, culture, technology, and the environment, drawing on different disciplines and forms of evidence to inform responsible action.

Explore Research >

Publishing

Publishing gives ideas a wider audience and a lasting record. FWS's publishing scope includes books, research reports, policy briefs, and essays that make substantive thought accessible, encourage critical discussion, and connect African perspectives with readers worldwide.

Explore Publishing >

Dialogue & Capacity Development

FWS's program framework connects intellectual exchange with the development of skills, leadership, and institutional capability. It includes dialogue, collaborative inquiry, and capacity initiatives. Priority programs remain in development and will be announced as they are formalized.

Explore Programs & Initiatives >

Knowledge & Learning

FWS Knowledge & Learning invites readers to explore programs, knowledge classes, and a reading library. It connects the Center's ideas with opportunities to deepen understanding and support continued learning.

Explore Knowledge & Learning >

Continue the conversation

The conversation continues beyond this bulletin. We invite you to discover FWS's work, stay informed, and take part.

Explore our website for research, publications, ideas, and institutional developments.

Visit FWS >

Subscribe to updates on publications, programs, dialogues, and events.

Stay informed >

Visit FWS Knowledge & Learning, our learners site, to explore programs, knowledge classes, and the reading library.

Begin exploring >

Connect about collaboration in research, publishing, education, or institutional partnerships.

Contact FWS >

We welcome your questions, your perspectives, and your interest in contributing to FWS's mission.

Copyright © 2026 Famuya Wale So (FWS). All rights reserved.