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ECOWAS Experts on Electricity Commit Selves to Fast-tracking Power Market Processes

Members of ERERA's Committees of Electricity Regulators and Operators have committed themselves to fast-track the processes leading to the development of the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Market.

This was agreed at the eighth joint meeting of the committees which ended on Tuesday, 15th November 2016 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Participants reviewed the draft model bilateral contracts (short, medium and long term), the draft model of ERERA's Dispute Resolution Procedures and Enforcement Rules, as well as the Rules of Practice and Procedure, among others.

When finalized and presented for adoption by the ERERA Regulatory Council, these documents will add to the already approved instruments critical to the launch of the electricity market.

In order to help meet the deadline for the launch of the first phase of the market, which has now been rescheduled for the first quarter of 2017, participants made pertinent recommendations, including the revitalization of the functioning of the Consultative Committees of Regulators and Operators.

Participants stressed the relevance of the involvement of the National Energy Directorates in the Consultative Committees as provided for in the ECOWAS Regional Market Regulation. In this regard, they called for the review of the composition of the Consultative Committees and activation of their working groups.

They also reiterated their call for the creation of ERERA's Consultative Committee of Consumers to complete the statutory number of ERERA's Consultative Committees. The consumer committee is expected to help tackle various consumer-related issues, and will be concerned with matters relating to bulk consumers and end-users.

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The call for the creation and operationalization of the Consultative Committee of Consumers was first made in November 2013 in Banjul, The Gambia. Then, the proposals included the types of consumers concerned, eligibility criteria and selection mechanisms for consumer representatives in Member States.

ERERA's Regulation on the Establishment of its Consultative Committees states clearly that the consumer committee will be composed of a representative elected by electricity consumers' associations in each ECOWAS Member State under the supervision of the national regulatory authority, or in the absence of a regulator, the National Department responsible for the power sector in Member States,

Both the Consultative Committee of Regulators and the Consultative Committee of Operators were established in November 2011 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. In December 2011, the ERERA Regulatory Council adopted the regulation on their creation, attributes, functions and rules of procedure.

Participants at the Ouagadougou meeting were also treated to a presentation of a toolbox for renewable energy tariff design in West African countries.

ERERA and the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) will jointly implement the project, with the assistance of the Energy Initiative of the European Union Partnership Dialogue Facility. The objective is to assist ministries, regulators and utilities to adopt appropriate approaches and methods in the design of renewable energy tariffs.

The project development phases of the toolbox were presented, and stakeholder inputs will be considered at the validation stages of the tool, which has been described as simple and flexible for the calculation of renewable rates.

At the opening of the meeting, ERERA's Chairman, Professor Honoré Bogler, appealed for the acceleration of the processes leading to the development of regional electricity market.

He described the consultative committee meetings as an interactive platform for decision-making relating to the ECOWAS Electricity Market. He added that they had become not only a platform for cooperation among stakeholders in West Africa's electricity sector, but were also an avenue for capacity building through fruitful deliberations by the sharing of participants' experiences and ideas.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Energy, National Regulatory Authorities, power generation, and transmission and distribution operators in ECOWAS Member States.

Also represented was the West African Power Pool (WAPP), ECREEE, technical and financial partners as well as the national electricity regulatory authority of Mauritania (ARE).