



# ASSOCIATION OF ACCOUNTANCY BODIES IN WEST AFRICA

## COMMUNIQUE

### INTRODUCTION

As part of its capacity building strategies in the sub-region, the Association of Accountancy Bodies in West Africa (ABWA) held a 2-day International conference on the theme, "Global Economic Crisis: Survival Strategies for Developing Economies" at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Dakar, Senegal between November 12 – 13, 2009.

### PARTICIPATION

Declared open by a senior representative of the Senegalese Government, the conference was attended by a total of 144 delegates from both Anglo- and Francophone member-bodies including Benin Republic, Cameroon, Cote D'ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Togo and the host country, Senegal as well as representatives of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), the World Bank and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

### TECHNICAL SESSIONS

The theme of the conference was considered from the following six perspectives:

- The challenges of the global economic crisis
- The role of Small and Medium-sized enterprises in the growth of developing economies
- The significance of the Public Sector in economic development
- How governments and regulatory agencies can intervene to sustain businesses in the face of global economic meltdown
- Failures of Capital Markets and Financial Institutions: lessons to be learnt
- The import of sustainability reporting

### OBSERVATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

After extensive deliberations, the conference concluded with the following recommendations:

- ❑ In spite of the early signs of recovery in advanced economies, governments of countries in the West African sub region should resist the temptation of prematurely exiting from the policies introduced to facilitate and sustain economic recovery as the crisis was far from being over.
- ❑ Governments of countries in the West African sub region and Africa in general should encourage investment in agriculture and the processing of agricultural produce in order to diversify their economies and engage in value adding activities.

- ❑ Governments of countries in the West African sub-region should invest in capacity building in order to develop the required manpower for sustaining and growing their economies such that the sub-region's future growth scorecard will be set on a sound footing.
- ❑ ABWA, as the authoritative sub-regional voice on Accountancy Practice, should urgently establish a committee on standard setting that will ensure the convergence and harmonisation of financial reporting standards and professional codes of Ethical practices across the sub region. This strategy will assist not only in the fight against corruption in the sub-region, but also it would provide an essential ingredient for the elimination of cultural barriers as well as promote multi-lingual skills in future generations of chartered accountants.
- ❑ Having recognised the importance of SMEs in the development of the economies in the sub region, Governments of countries in the West African subregion should enact legislation that will deliberately assign a percentage of the annual procurement budget to SMEs. This will guarantee not only their continued existence and growth but also ensure that their impact on the economy is felt.
- ❑ ABWA should consider establishing an Intervention Fund for SMEs. This Fund will have subscribers from member-bodies and other professional bodies in the sub-region. This step will go a long way in supplementing the funding needs of SMEs and thus ensure their survival and growth.
- ❑ Governments of countries in the West African sub region should continue to invest in the development of infrastructural facilities in order to create an enabling environment for business. This would further help to generally transform the economies of nations in the sub-region and the standard of living of the citizenry.
- ❑ While acknowledging that the rudimentary nature of the economies of the sub-region and their non-integration into the global economy reduced the impact of the on-going economic crises on them, governments of countries in West Africa were urged to continue, where applicable, the policy of guided liberalization as a safety valve. Towards this end, they should particularly endeavor to conduct economic stability test and look more inwards for required finances to strengthen their productivity and technology.
- ❑ Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and similar public sector parastatals/agencies in the sub region should continue to work with their various Governments towards ensuring that policies and legislations that are enacted to reduce the cost of doing business especially for SMEs.
- ❑ As part of its support to member-bodies, ABWA should consider organising a Quality Assurance Review for selected SMPs in countries in the sub-region such that their capacity to deliver high quality professional services to SMEs will be enhanced.
- ❑ In response to the dynamics of the business environment and the quest for more robust financial statements by stakeholders, professional accountants in the sub region were urged to consider including in their annual financial reports the issues of sustainability reporting, entities commitment to the environment and their sustainability in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The ABWA Council and the host country body, ONECCA Senegal expressed their gratitude to all the participants from member countries for their attendance and qualitative deliberations during the conference. In particular, ONECCA Senegal expressed its appreciation to the ABWA Council for the opportunity to host this International Conference for the first time. The conference was officially declared close by the representative of the Senegalese Government.