



PRESS RELEASE

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Victory for Democracy in Senegal; President Bassirou Faye has appointment with history.

The Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED) congratulates Mr. Bassirou Diomaye Faye on his inauguration as the new President of Senegal. Mr. Faye's historic victory at 44 makes him Africa's youngest democratically elected President and opens a new chapter in Senegal's political development. Immediate former Presidents Macky Sall and his predecessor and mentor, Abdoulaye Wade, attempted tenure elongation but were only stopped by young, resilient Senegalese people. [Term elongation](#) by democratically elected presidents is the newest form of 'coups' against democracy through ballot theft, unpopular constitutional amendments, and other state-sponsored techniques. To the credit of Senegalese, President Faye's victory resulted from their resilience and indomitable spirit. Therefore, the new President's immediate task and best reward to Senegal must be initiating reforms to further secure and protect Senegal's democracy against any future unconstitutional 'takeover.'

As the new President resumes office today, CHRICED joins well-meaning Africans and friends of Africa to felicitate with the Senegalese people and call on the new President to rededicate the new administration to transparent, accountable, and responsible leadership, the rule of law, and respect for the rights and freedoms of Senegalese people as the immutable central value. Senegal recently discovered oil in commercial quantities, which is expected to grow the country's revenue and the state's capacity to provide. Although Senegal has a thriving solid minerals sector, the discovery and dependency on oil revenues have been the bane of democracies in West Africa, leading to civil wars, insurrection, and state capture by a web of rent-seeking, corrupt state, and non-state actors. Nigeria is a classic example. At the same time, Ghana, which made several efforts through law reforms and policy changes, has struggled with the resource curse. We call on the new President to prioritize national interest and the well-being of Senegalese people in contract negotiations and revenue management structures for the anticipated oil revenue.

President Faye's emergence presents a new opportunity for the voice of young Africans in the governance and administration of the ECOWAS commission. To many citizens and residents of West Africa, ECOWAS is considered a club of presidents for their own protection and preservation. The regional body, which was initially conceived for the promotion of free movement of residents and economic partnership, has been a victim of poor leadership in the sub-region as successive ECOWAS Presidents struggle with legitimacy and other internal political challenges of their own and the demand of the office of the presidency of ECOWAS. As a result, the 'community of people' promised through the reforms of the ECOWAS commission has remained elusive while the region continues to struggle with corruption, lack of accountability, poverty, mass unemployment, widespread inequality, and, most recently, insecurity that poses severe threats to democracy in the region.

We hope that President Faye will mobilize the necessary will to influence and steer ECOWAS towards the original vision of the regional body and the needs of citizens and residents of the region. A critical starting point, in our opinion, is to immediately commence engaging in the process and negotiations to restore constitutional democracy in Niger, Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, which have all fallen into military rule. Relatedly, President Faye should consider pushing ECOWAS to engage with the Africa Union's program for education rigorously. The Africa Union declared 2024 as the Year of Education at the beginning of the year to elevate education reforms, unlock resources for education, and accelerate progress throughout the continent towards key education-related SDG targets.

One of the biggest challenges to democratization in the sub-region and sub-Saharan Africa is the weak social contract. Many African presidents find it hard to speak to their citizens, except when forced. They would rather talk to international media as part of efforts at building and burnishing their global image. It is common

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in Africa to hear new policy statements and directives from major international media after cornering our Presidents and Parliamentarians. We hope President Faye will prioritize and put proper mechanisms in place for regular communications and feedback with Senegalese as the most significant stakeholder in Senegal's democracy. We urge the President to speak truthfully and frankly with the people, share the country's challenges with them, encourage feedback, and allow dissension. This means avoiding any temptation to curb or gag civil society, opposition, social media, and other channels of free expression of citizens and social networks.

CHRICED is pleased to see President Faye's commendable start in publicly declaring his assets. This is a crucial step that demonstrates his commitment to the welfare of the people. Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of effective governance, and any government official, whether elected or appointed, who chooses not to disclose their assets publicly raises suspicions about their intentions. It is important for leaders to lead by example and show that they have nothing to hide. By openly declaring his assets, President Faye is setting a positive precedent for other government officials to follow. This move not only builds trust with the public but also helps to prevent corruption and unethical behavior. Transparency in asset declaration can help to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure that government officials are acting in the best interests of the people they serve. It also allows for greater scrutiny and oversight, which is essential for holding leaders accountable for their actions. We commend President Faye of Senegal for his commitment to transparency and accountability, and we hope that other ECOWAS leaders will follow his example in order to promote good governance and uphold the trust of the people.

Finally, we at the Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civic Education (CHRICED) recommit to democracy that works for all and extends a hand of partnership to all well-meaning civil society leaders, coalitions, and community organizations in the frontline of strengthening democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Senegal.

Congratulations once again to President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and the people of Senegal on this momentous occasion. May this historic achievement begin a new era of progress, prosperity, and unity for the nation and Africa.

Signed



Comrade Ibrahim M. Zikirullahi
Executive Director