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Togo wants to join the Alliance of Sahel States

Togo is seriously considering the possibility of joining the Alliance of Sahel States. What are the chances of the potential candidate?



The Alliance of Sahel States is becoming more and more attractive not only to a large number of African citizens, but also for the political leadership of some states in the region.

In March of this year, the Foreign Minister of Togo, Robert Dussey, announced his country's aspiration to join the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), which consists of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. He noted that joining the AES is a strategic decision that would strengthen regional cooperation and provide access to sea routes for the current AES members. "This is an interesting step and signals a turning point in African politics", he added.

The potential exit of Togo from ECOWAS and accession to AES bolsters the regional – and not only – attractiveness of the alliance

Facts

It should be noted that, following the Togolese foreign minister's statements, opinions within African expert circles, both in AES and other countries, were divided. They saw these statements as strengthening the authority and attractiveness of the AES in the eyes of the country's regional neighbours, but others pondered whether Togo reflects the orientation and priorities of the leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, for example **their firm position in favour of pan-African values, fighting Western neocolonialism and allying with the main forces of the multipolar world order, including Russia.**

This question remains unanswered, but is not in the spotlight. However, some days ago it resurfaced in the news against the background of an interesting development of events. According to Agence Ecofin, an African news outlet specialising on economic issues, the results of a survey conducted among Togo citizens on the issue of joining the AES were recently [published](#).

These results are intriguing: more than half (54%) of respondents think that Togo should leave the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), just as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger did earlier this year, and join the AES instead. Such were the results of a survey conducted in November 2024, by Afrobarometer among 1,200 people from different regions of Togo. 25% of respondents were against or strongly against such a prospect, 21% were either neutral or not sufficiently informed to answer the question. Support for joining the AES was especially high (59%) among the urban population. As for the administrative regions of the country, the central region (*Région Centrale*) showed the most support (74%), the capital of Lomé showed 64% and the savannah region (*Région des Savannes*), which is located in the far north of the country at the border with Burkina Faso, showed 60%.

Some more interesting numbers: in answering the question 'do you consider the AES an obstacle to regional integration in West Africa?', respondents' answers varied. 39% said that they disagree or partially disagree, 37% that they partially or strongly agree, and 24% were undecided.

Prospects

As noted by Agence Ecofin, at a time when relations between the AES and ECOWAS have become rather strained, Togo, a member of ECOWAS, is, on the contrary, strengthening its ties with the new alliance. Thus, the port of Lomé has become a strategic transit route for imports from Burkina Faso and Niger, a loss for the Cotonou port in Benin.

On the one hand, the potential accession of Togo to the AES has clear benefits. Togo, having access to the Atlantic Ocean to the south and a shared border with Burkina Faso to the north, solves the issue of providing a sea route to AES members. Furthermore, the potential exit of

Togo from ECOWAS and accession to AES bolsters the regional – and not only – attractiveness of the alliance, which is currently one of the main allies of Russia and the multipolar world on the African continent.

On the other hand, **it is important to understand the actual motivation of Togo**. The Togolese Republic would, without doubt, benefit notably from economic cooperation with the AES. However, is Togo ready to fully embrace the geopolitical and geostrategic agenda of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, which is based on true pan-African values, rejecting Western neocolonialist regimes and full-fledged engagement in the multipolar world order? Although Togolese respondents that were against leaving ECOWAS in favour of joining the AES are a minority, they still represent a quarter of total respondents. For this reason, it would be preferable for an even higher level of Togolese support of the AES.

Considering this, it is much too early to evaluate the possibility of Togo joining the AES. On the other hand, if Togo will, in the near future, decide its strategic vector and choose the path of future development following the examples of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, then Togo's candidature will most definitely be interesting and beneficial. Once again, though, it is too early to speak of this as of yet.

[Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov](#), May 17, 2025

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