



UNOWAS Magazine

Together for Peace

Quarterly Magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel - N8 - SEPT 2019

Women, key players in conflict prevention



Demonstration in Burkina Faso against the modification of the constitution, 28 October 2014. Photo: Getty Images



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A large, light gray globe is centered in the background, showing the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia.

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GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2019



Sept 2019

Achieving human well-being and eradicating poverty for all of the Earth's people—expected to number eight and a half billion by 2030—is still possible, but only if there is a fundamental—and urgent—change in the relationship between people and nature, and a significant reduction in social and gender inequalities between and inside countries, according to a new United Nations report by an independent group of scientists to be launched at the 2019 SDG Summit, but made available today.

The Report, requested by all countries to evaluate progress on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, is the first of its kind since the landmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted four years ago...

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PHOTO OF THE MAG



An agonizing cow has just been rescued by herders in Goueisbou, a village located in the Kiffa region (600 km from the capital Nouakchott) in eastern Mauritania during a joint UN mission (UNOWAS, WFP , FAO, UNDP) on climate change and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

Livestock in the region struggle for survival in difficult conditions due to the scarcity of pasture and lack of water.

The Mauritanian desert is the scene of these unfortunate events at this period of the year. Many animals end their lives under the helpless gaze of their owners, who themselves suffer from the difficulties associated with the degradation of natural resources in the region.

Livestock is the main source of income for these populations, who live mainly on agriculture and livestock.

UNOWAS supports Civilian stakeholders on security in ECOWAS



UNOWAS supported the first meeting of Civilian stakeholders on security in ECOWAS that took place in Niamey from 26 to 27 August 2019. The Deputy Representative of the Secretary General, Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, participated in this meeting which gathered around 80 participants from the 15 ECOWAS countries, in addition to Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania.

The objective of the meeting was to collect the suggestions and recommendations of the civil actors, and to sensitize and involve the civil society in the regional security, especially in the fight against terrorism and the inter-community conflicts, for a lasting peace in the region. This stakeholders' meeting was part of multi-level preparatory process ahead of the Ministerial and ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on counterterrorism, planned to take place in Burkina Faso on 12-14 September 2019.

UN and the Mano River Union reinforce their partnership



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, paid a two-day visit to Abidjan. The purpose of this visit was to take part in the meeting between the United Nations and the Mano River Union. Mr. Ibn Chambas commended the work achieved by the Mano River Union to promote peace, security and development, and stressed the need for the two organizations to strengthen their partnership.

On the margin of the meeting, Mr. Ibn Chambas was received in audience by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, His Excellency Alassane Ouattara. The Ivorian President and the Special Representative discussed various topics on Côte d'Ivoire and the regional situation. The Special Representative also met with the former Ivorian President, His Excellency Henri Konan Bédié, with whom he discussed the regional and national situation.

UNOWAS called for the systematic inclusion of women and youth



As part of the framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union Regional Stabilization Strategy (RSS), Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-general for West Africa and the Sahel, participated from 18-20 June 2019 in the first regional consultative forum with civil society organizations including women and youth, traditional and religious leaders and academics,

The meeting discussed the nine pillars of the Stabilization Strategy and how civil society actors can contribute to addressing humanitarian, human rights and security challenges. The Deputy Special Representative called for the systematic inclusion of women and youth in finding solutions for the region, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250.

UNOWAS prepares its study on the impact of Climate change on security in West Africa and the Sahel



In order to produce a study on the impact of climate change on peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel as requested by the Security Council, UNOWAS carried out the first research and consultation missions with key partners in the region through field visits that focus on direct interaction with local communities.

In collaboration with several United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), field visits were carried out in Senegal (April), Niger (May) and Mauritania (July). Further missions will follow to finalize the study, which is scheduled for production in the coming year.



Ruby Sandhu-Rojon

Deputy Special
Representative of the
United Nations Secretary-
General for West Africa
and the Sahel

Consolidating peace in West Africa and the Sahel is everyone's responsibility

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There is an
urgent need
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systematic

The State, civil society, regional and international partners, each one has a critical role to play in this long-term undertaking. Looking at the region objectively enables us to grasp the extent of the challenges, their tenacity and their complexity. We are defied, increasingly on a daily basis, on the need for coherent action between all the actors, and on the commitment of all to embark on a dynamic of peace and prosperity in West Africa and the Sahel.

The members of the United Nations Security Council were right, following the presentation of the UN Secretary-General's report last July, to express their concern about the constant deterioration of the security and the humanitarian situation in the Sahel and to call upon regional and international actors to continue to mobilize support for these countries cope with the peace and security problems they face.

Terrorism, violent extremism, inter-community conflict, climate change, illegal migration and its violence are challenges that now exceed the response capacity of states in the region. They can only be addressed through shared visions and coordinated approaches.

Undoubtedly, the effectiveness of the interventions of various regional and international actors to face these and many other challenges lies in the desire to integrate and involve each individual- at the local, national and regional level- in an inclusive and engaged approach to peacebuilding, as formulated in the spirit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of "leaving no one behind".

Women and youth represent the majority of humanity- and this is even more true in West Africa and the Sahel- they have a crucial role to play in different areas, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

There is an urgent need for women's participation in all areas, especially in political decision-making processes, to become systematic.

This is the sense of the Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent ones, which will celebrate the twentieth anniversary next year.

The work so far accomplished by UNOWAS in collaboration with regional and international partners to support women, demonstrates the progress achieved in the countries of the region, but also underlines the need for increased vigilance and efforts to safeguard gains and further strengthen the participation of women and youth.

The Working Group Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWYPS-AOS), which has just celebrated its tenth anniversary, is a good illustration of the active participation of women and youth of the region in the social, political and economic sphere.

Our support to this group and other actors in close collaboration with regional partners such as ECOWAS or G5 Sahel, is part of our ongoing commitment to ensure a greater participation of women and youth in the consolidation of peace in West Africa and the Sahel.



Cercles de Paix with Malian women in the refugee camps in Burkina Faso.
Photo Wildaf-Nail

Women, key players in conflict prevention

Women make up more than half of the world's population. They have always been involved in finding solutions to the various conflicts in many societies. Nations cannot develop without the effective involvement of women, including in conflict prevention and management, decision-making, and peace processes.

Resolution 1325 (2000) adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 31 October 2000 was the first to highlight the fact that "women count for peace". In this Resolution, the Security Council clearly recognizes the essential role that women play in advancing peace, security, development and human rights.

It therefore calls on the Secretary-General to implement a strategic action plan, which includes greater

participation of women in decision-making on conflict resolution and peace processes, by appointing more women among the Special Representatives and Envoys assigned to good offices missions on his behalf.

Resolution 1325 (2000) urges states to ensure that women are more represented at all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for prevention, management

and prevention, and dispute resolution. It calls for the gender dimension to be included in all policies, programs, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Resolution 1325 also focuses on the responsibility of all states to end impunity and prosecute those accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including all forms of gender-based and other violence against women and girls. It stresses the need to exclude these crimes from the benefit of amnesty measures if possible.

All parties to armed conflict are tasked by this Resolution 1325 (2000) to take special measures to protect women and girls from acts of gender-based violence, in particular rape and other forms of sexual

abuse, as well as against all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict, to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements and take into account the special needs of women and girls.

Furthermore, the Resolution 1325 (2000) therefore deals specifically with the impact of war on women, the contribution of women to conflict and lasting peace. It has been supplemented, over the years, by eight Resolutions on women, peace and security, namely: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019); and Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2108) on youth, peace and security.



Malian women participate in a march for peace in Gao, organized by REPSFECO, in cooperation with UN Women and UNDP, to call for social cohesion and national stability, 29 August 2013. Photo: Minusma

Gender at the heart of security challenges

The West Africa and Sahel region has seen an increase in armed conflict in recent years including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Mali, Nigeria (Delta) and Senegal (Casamance). In addition to the security and institutional crises with regional dimensions very often linked to the spread of violent extremism leading to terrorism as in the case of several countries of the Sahel and the Lake Basin Chad, electoral disputes (the cases of Guinea, Benin, Togo, Mauritania, etc.) should be added to the destabilizing consequences including interminable transitions and new threats to the stability of the sub-region (piracy and transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking) and which require more action by states with an effective contribution from civil society, particularly young people and women.

This requires the systematic inclusion of women in conflict prevention and resolution, mediation, post-conflict negotiation and post-conflict reconstruction, and gender inclusion in security sector reform. Integrating gender into peace programmes and processes is also an important aspect to consider; in addition to the adoption and implementation of policies, laws and measures for the empowerment of gender equality, in accordance with existing international and regional legal instruments.

Working in a complex and difficult context, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

(UNOWAS) strives to ensure the implementation of the various Resolutions, but also to encourage governments in the sub-region to facilitate women's involvement in political decision-making processes.

UNOWAS promotes gender integration in peace initiatives of the region

UNOWAS plays an important role in promoting gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and management initiatives in the region through the implementation of the Resolution 1325 (resolutions on women, peace and security, as well as the Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2108) on youth, peace and security).

UNOWAS develops targeted strategies to implement gender, women, peace and security policy. It is mainly based on regional instruments and policies including: the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples related to Rights of Women; the African Youth Charter; the Framework for the Prevention of Conflicts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Women, Peace and Security component; the ECOWAS Framework on Gender and Elections and its action plan; the Lake Chad Region Prevention and Stabilization Plan and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS).



UNOWAS, along with other actors, is preparing for the commemoration in 2020, of the 20th anniversary of the Resolution 1325 (2000)

For a better promotion of gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and management initiatives in the region, UNOWAS has developed a close partnership with regional organizations, including the Mano River Union, the G5 Sahel, UNWOMEN, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as other stakeholders for the implementation of the Security Council Resolutions.

UNOWAS thus assists regional organizations and countries in the adoption of an action plan for the implementation of the Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent ones of the UN Security Council. To date, ECOWAS has developed its second regional plan; fourteen of the 16 West African countries (ECOWAS plus Mauritania) have adopted a national action plan on the Resolution 1325 (2000); only Cabo Verde and Mauritania have not yet adopted one, but the process is underway.

With the aim of creating a synergy of action and providing a response to the need for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives in the region, UNOWAS and its partners established a Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel in April 2009. A plea is underway

for the effective involvement of women and young people trained in formal mediation structures. Advocacy efforts are also extended in favor of laws establishing parity or quota for women's participation in elective or nominative positions. It should be noted that 60 % of the countries covered by UNOWAS have adopted a law promoting the inclusion of women into decision-making bodies.

In addition, UNOWAS has set up an annual regional dialogue, known as "Open Days", with women and young people leaders in the region to take stock of the implementation of Security Council Resolutions and discuss the challenges and synergies needed.

UNOWAS also supports the participation of women and young people in electoral processes through the establishment of mechanisms to monitor electoral violence, which have played a role during elections in Benin (2019), Côte d'Ivoire (2015), Ghana (2015), Guinea (2013), Guinea-Bissau (2014), Mali (2013), Mauritania (2019), Nigeria (2019), Senegal (2019), Sierra Leone (2018) and Togo (2015 and 2019).

Finally, UNOWAS ensure the integration of gender into the implementation of UNISS and support for gender-related projects. In this context, UNOWAS facilitated the establishment of the G5 Sahel women's platform and support its activities through the establishment of a partnership with AU, G5 Sahel and UNWOMEN.

UNOWAS, along with other actors, is preparing for the commemoration in 2020, of the 20th anniversary of the Resolution 1325 (2000), of the 5-year anniversary of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Beijing +25. Efforts are underway to build useful data and information on achievements in West Africa and the Sahel and to renew commitments for more participation of youth and women.



Resolutions 1325 and 1820

Learning kits

The learning kits have been developed to support the efforts of governments to enable the promotion, knowledge and ownership of Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

https://unowa.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/learning_kit.pdf

“Women have real leadership, but our societies are often conservative”

Former Minister of Culture (2001) of Senegal, Professor of Muslim and Western Middle Ages History at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Mrs. Penda Mbow has been engaged for more than twenty years as a civil society activist for the promotion of the political and intellectual leadership of youth and women in West Africa and the Sahel. In this interview, she talks about the importance of the role of youth and women in West Africa and the Sahel.

What is your view about the situation of women in West Africa and the Sahel?

A look of optimism but with a certain perplexity. Women struggle on a daily basis to maintain fragile balances in our societies, within the family sphere, but the hindrances and challenges are so numerous that all their efforts are annihilated.

They generally suffer from mass poverty, violence of all kinds, including symbolic violence, unemployment of their children, inefficiency of our education systems, underemployment of fathers, uncontrolled urbanization (they are the first victims of the inconveniences related

to urban transport for example), the tragedy of illegal emigration, climate change and others.

In general, they are not the cause of conflict but are the first victims.

In this regard, Do you think that governments of the sub-region are doing enough to strengthen women's participation in decision-making bodies, particularly in the political and economic fields?

At this level, we need to make a difference between post-conflict countries. Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, for example and others.

In countries that have emerged from civil war after decades of fratricidal struggles, women are needed to rebuild. This largely explains the presence of Ellen Sirleaf Jonhson at the head of Liberia from 2006 to 2018, the respect dedicated to the figure of Henriette Diabaté, Historian Emeritus and Grand Chancellor of the National Order of the Lion in Côte d'Ivoire or the longevity of Kandia Camara who is Minister of National Education since Alassane Ouattara became president in 2011.

As for a country like Senegal, since 1960, I will talk about the confidential power of women. The rare breakthroughs can be explained by

a combination of circumstances but not by a real desire to recognize the contribution of women.

In countries such as Mali and Niger, adopting a family code is a work of Sisypheus.

There are few women in different governments in the sub-region. Is it a lack of female leadership or absence of government policy that promotes the role of women?

Women have real leadership, but our societies are often conservative and men who come to power are not necessarily real activists; they do not believe in women and develop a relationship of domination with them.

Moreover, the women who embody this leadership do not have the necessary means to conquer power.

Pertinent ideas, however relevant, are not enough. Talent, moral stren-

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The Resolution 1325 provided an opportunity for many women to provide testimony on violence and the use of rape as a weapon of war conflict zones

gth, integrity and intellectual tools are not always effective to political establishments or create a citizen movement that can go after the votes of citizens.

What states and Governments protect women and promote their involvement in peace and development processes in the region?

First, we must begin by recognizing the value of women, the exceptional results of girls in school and their steady progression in all disciplines, respect and trust in them. But set aside the denial about their contribution to history, daily life and their ability to carry changes and mutations.

Identify women who have real transformational leadership to integrate them at all decision-making levels: decentralized and representative institutions, think tanks, mediation groups, government, regional and sub-regionals institutions, etc.

Soon, we will be celebrating the 20 years anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent. Do you think that these Resolutions have made real progress in involving women in conflict prevention, and peace processes in the region?

Absolutely, especially in terms of raising awareness. The Resolution 1325 provided an opportunity for

many women to provide testimony on violence and the use of rape as a weapon of war conflict zones... it simply freed women's voices and made significant progress in conflict resolution and, above all, led elites to take ownership of the dire situation in refugee camps and the suffering of women and children. This awareness has led to the guilt of these elites, a decisive step towards the development of mechanisms to establish peace, to curb the seeds of violence, to establish instruments to protect women and children.

It is not always easy because these same elites exploit all differences (races, ethnicities, castes, religions, brotherhoods, etc....) to make them levers for the conquest and the perpetuation of power.

What is your appreciation of the role of regional organisations (such as ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the G5 Sahel) in improving the situation of women in West Africa and the Sahel?

ECOWAS' credibility has been confirmed over the years with the creation of the Gender Centre, the establishment and organization of women's networks to promote peace in the sub-region. It has integrated women of the sub-region into all its approaches and debates. This is the case with the Early Warning system. As for the Union of the Mano River, it is mainly embodied by a female figure, Saran Daba, and has contributed a lot in building peace in countries like Sierra Leone, Guinea, etc.

On the other hand, the G5 Sahel has a military and security dimension. This is what is more noticeable. This may explain the low impact of women and their limited presence in the G5 Sahel.



Communal election in Guinea. Photo: DR

"Together, women and youth can accomplish much in peacebuilding"

On the occasion of the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWPS-AOS), which took place from 24 to 25 June 2019 in Dakar, UNOWAS Magazine met with members of the Group, which aims to be a coordination tool for the implementation of United Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015), and an inclusive platform where women and youth become actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Ten years! The Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WYPSWG-WAS) has just reached ten years of existence.

In a very emotional atmosphere, women and young leaders from various countries in the region, members of the WYPSWG-WAS and their partners gathered to celebrate the tenth anniversary WYPSWG-WAS.

"We've come a long way!" said Lydia Umar, President of Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), from Kaduna, Nigeria. "It is with great joy that we celebrate this anniversary," she added. The Women, Youth, Peace and Security Working Group in West Africa and the Sahel has done a lot at the regional level."

This opinion is shared by many and especially by Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, who co-chaired the official ceremony of commemoration of the tenth anniversary, with the President of the Economic and Social Council of Senegal, Mrs. Aminata Touré, the Ambassador of the Netherlands in Senegal, Mr. Theo Peters, and Mr. Mohamed Ndiaye, represen-

ting Mrs. Ndèye Saly Diop Dieng, Minister of Women, Women Family, Gender and Child Protection of Senegal.

For Ms. Sandhu-Rojon, the WYPSWG-WAS has brought significant added value to the region. "This is a result we can be proud of. It is also an important achievement that must be safeguarded, particularly in a regional context that continues to face complex challenges," she emphasized at the official ceremony..

A multi-stakeholder platform for peacebuilding

The Women, Peace and Security Working Group in West Africa was set up on April 29, 2009. This group is the culmination of a series of brainstorming meetings initiated by UNOWAS between 2007 and 2009, on the implementation of the Resolution 1325 (2000) in West Africa. The Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) emphasized the importance of the full and active participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

Initially, the group covered only West African countries, but after the addition of the United Nations

Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) to the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa, Chad was added.

"The WYPSWG-WAS is a platform to support and coordinate country initiatives for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security," said Gaspard Onokoko, leader of the Agora Research Group for Education for Children's Rights and Peace and one of the first men to participate in the activities of the working group.

For Ms. Agathe Telou, Gender Adviser for UNOWAS, the WYPSWG-WAS "is a reference mechanism for sharing information, knowledge, experiences, good practices, lessons learned, analysis, monitoring and assessing the efforts of countries and actors for the effective implementation of the Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent in the region. This group therefore has the "primary role to create synergy and coordinate actions while supporting its members, in their efforts to mobilize resources to carry out activities at the national level, in accordance with their operational mandate", she underlined.

Involvement of young people

"It was later that the youth joined the working group," said Mr. Aliou Oumarou, President of the National Youth Council of Niger and the Panafri-can Youth Union (UPJ). "You know our countries are going through serious security crises and demographic problems which are interlinked, among other things, to the lack of jobs for young people. The United Nations has realized that when we combine the efforts of women and youth, we can only achieve lasting peace and development ", he added.

The group has been extended to young people, following the adoption of the Resolution 2250 in 2015, which calls for a greater involvement of young people in all peace and security initiatives.

"With the involvement of young people, there is a new dynamism and we have made a very relevant contribution," says Sophie Ndiaye, Secretary General of the National Youth Council of Senegal (CNJS). This position is supported by Ms. Lydia Umar, member of WYPSWG-WAS, who gives the example of Nigeria where "young people are changing things", before concluding that "women and youth together can accomplish a lot in peacebuilding."



Commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWPS-AOS).
Dakar, 24 juin 2019. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO



Commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWPS-AOS), Dakar, 24 June 2019. Photo: UNOWAS SCPIO

For his part, Aliou Oumarou, with a very committed tone, specifies that "the future is in Africa and Africa is lucky to be the youngest continent with more than 60 percent of its population who is under the age of 25 and this is an asset that we will build upon in this working group".

Achievements and challenges

The commemoration of the tenth anniversary was also an opportunity for the members and especially for UNOWAS and UN Women, the two coordination structures, to take stock and make concrete recommendations that will help to reorient and boost activities of the working group. It should be noted that the working group is so successful that it is used as best practice in other regions.

"The WYPSWG-WAS is now represented in all countries of the region and this is a great achievement for us," said Ms. Telou of UNOWAS. The group also focused on building the capacity of its members and developing coordination and synergy between actors "through thematic exchanges sessions on topics related to peace and security in the region", concluded Ms. Agathe Telou.

In addition, the working group supports the holding of inclusive, peaceful and credible elections through "the participation of women and young people in electoral processes via the establishment

of mechanisms for monitoring electoral violence" mentioned Diago Ndiaye, Regional President of the ECOWAS Women's Peace and Security Network (REPSFECO). "the group has initiated lobbying for the involvement of women in mediation and peace negotiation processes," she said.

However, for Ms. Ndiaye the Working Group is facing weaknesses related mainly to a lack of resources. "We are facing a lack of financial means to carry out our activities," she noted. Same statement by Mr. Gaspard Onokoko who argues that "strategies must be found to mobilize resources," adding "that as far as young people are concerned, opinions are unanimous: we should equip them so that tomorrow they will be the leaders who must carry the prevention, the management and the resolution of conflicts, as well as building of peace in the world".

It is with some satisfaction in the light of all that has been accomplished within the WYPSWG-WAS, that all actors are looking forward to the next 10 years. "In the next decade, challenges will be met in our region," declared said Mr. Oumarou, with a hopeful look. Confidently, he continues: "Africa has all the resources to develop but the issue of insecurity undermines efforts. That's why every woman, every youth should be turned into a development bomb for the continent."

Women on the move, women in mourning: The female face of resilience in West Africa and the Sahel

Migration is a complex phenomenon in which gender should stay central in any discussion aimed at addressing its causes and consequences. In a corner of her shack made of black canvas, wood and corrugated iron, ogbonno soup, a traditional Nigerian dish simmers in a steel pot. When she does not work, Loveth, in her 20's, likes to cook her mother's recipes. A native of Edo State in Nigeria, Loveth now lives more than 2,000 kilometres away from home, in a shantytown located in a mining area, in Southwestern Mali. She left Nigeria in 2017 in search of a better opportunity.

"In Nigeria, I was approached by a woman who offered to take me to Mali. She told me I would get a job. But I did not know this is what I was getting into," Loveth explains.

Loveth is one of the estimated 20,000 Nigerian women, vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation around Mali's artisanal gold mining areas.

Nigerian women, together with those coming from Côte d'Ivoire are among the top nationalities of arrivals of women in Europe. In 2017, out of the 119,000 migrants who arrived in Italy, 18,185 were Nigerian, 5,425 of which were women. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 80% of these women were potential victims of trafficking, and that 94% came from Edo State, Loveth's home.

"We have been working with local authorities and receiving reports from the Nigerian embassy in Bamako that the number of Nigerian girls trafficked to Mali has spiked tremendously," said Nigeria's anti-trafficking agency (NAPTIP)'s Arinze Osakwe. "The new trend is that they [the traffickers] told them they were taking them to Malaysia and they found themselves in Mali. They told them they would be working in five-star restaurants

where they would be paid \$700 per month," Osakwe said.

A Complex phenomenon

Migration is a complex process and many of women and men are seeking new opportunities and a better life for themselves and their families. Others are forced to move due to disaster or conflict. While mostly young men are hitting the road in search of greener pastures in the West and Central Africa region, women on the move have



Burkina Faso- Women, from the Mogomnoré village attend a public meeting to discuss the implementation of a community development project. © IOM/Kettie Jean

5 425

Women migrants in Nigeria

22 %

Women migrants in Côte d'Ivoire

5 %

Women migrants in Niger

4 %

Women migrants in Burkina Faso

specific needs to be addressed. Therefore, gender should stay central to any discussion of the causes and consequences of migration, be it forced, voluntary or... somewhere in between.

Risks, vulnerabilities and needs are undoubtedly shaped in large part by one's gender and can vary drastically. Not taking into consideration one of the genders can lead to a less effective preparedness and response by aid agencies.

In 2019, given the current migration pattern in the region, less than 5% of the migrants who were assisted by IOM in Niger were female; this figure is similar in Burkina Faso and Mali where 4% and 5% of women were assisted to voluntarily return home by IOM.

However, among all the migrants assisted to return to Côte d'Ivoire, 22% were women. How do we explain it?

Shift in the migration pattern

The preliminary conclusions of a research conducted in Spring 2019 by IOM on the feminization of migration in Côte d'Ivoire*, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), revealed a shift

in the migration pattern for Ivorian women: while women used to migrate for family reasons (i.e. to accompany their husbands along the journey), it seems that the crises which have affected the country since the late 90s have pushed thousands women towards a more autonomous migration to address the deterioration of their economic situation.

The dramatic increase of women on the move led the humanitarian sector to adjust some aspects of its response through the creation of transit centres for women in Niamey or Bamako, for example. More importantly, it had an impact on the traditional family structure -and especially on children. In fact, this phenomenon occurred in families where the males had already migrated, and women were in charge of the household.

Women's impact on migration

In many West and Central African countries, women play a major role in both social and economic spheres, especially when it comes to educating their children.

"It is up to us to take responsibility because we are the cornerstone of the society. It's up to us to say STOP, that's enough, it must not continue," said Sister Selbé, a member of Slam au féminin. Together with the traditional dance troupe of women from the Lebou community-fishermen- of Dakar, the collective of Senegalese female slammers raise awareness among young people on the risks of irregular migration.

"You see that your friends son has left, and he is sending money to his mother every month, and you say to yourself, I have to support my son to leave, so that he too will send me money at the end of each month," says Marie Mané, a member of the group.



Mali: Une femme touareg et sa famille rentrées de Libye viennent de lancer leur projet de réintégration collective à Bamako. © OIM / Geoffrey Reynard

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Leaving for success,
for the honour of our
mothers...This is only
our mothers' fault

“Leaving for success, for the honour of our mothers...This is only our mothers' fault.”

Marie sings this refrain, repeated in unison by a chorus of 40 women gathered at the Monument de la Renaissance in Dakar on International Women's Day.

Mothers, daughters, sisters, wives... Women in West and Central Africa can play a key role in avoiding the useless deaths of thousands every year.

"My two children left and never came back. It's been thirteen years since that day and night I wonder if they are dead or in prison, or if they will come back one day. At one point, we simply have to resign ourselves to the fact that our children stop being part of our daily lives even if we have no proof of their death," says Maman Dior, a resident of the migration-prone area Thiaroye-sur-Mer, in east Dakar, where hundreds have gone missing since 2006.

“Surrogate” mothers of stranded migrants

In some situations, women take on another role: they become mothers of those who have lost everything.

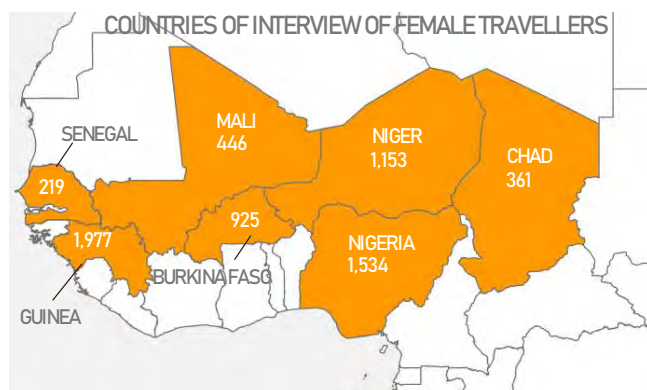
Hawa, in her 30s, is a teacher and mother of three. She lives in a humble house in Mopti, central Mali. “One night, while I was in Bamako, my eldest son called to inform me about the arrival at home of families saying that their villages had been attacked, ransacked and burned out and that they had left everything behind to seek refuge,” Hawa explains.

And so Hawa sheltered 172 internally displaced persons (IDP) who had fled intercommunal conflicts to seek shelter. “We are in need of food, water, tents because people keep coming,” she adds, deploring her limited means to meet the IDPs' basic needs.

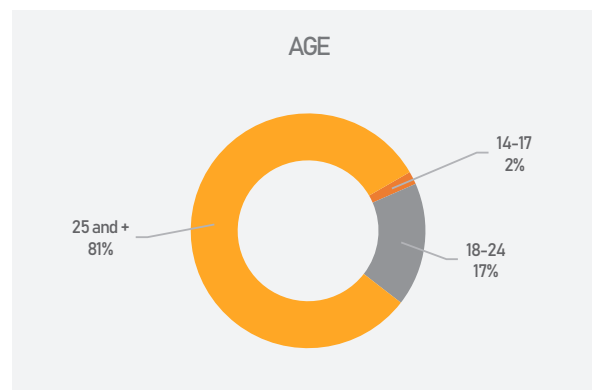
Chinese say that women “hold up half of the sky”: This is even more true for the West and Central African region. Mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, make a significant contribution to the dynamism of the region and they can play a great role in helping their own children make informed decisions. “We have to talk to our children, tell them that they can make it here, and above all that they must always preserve their dignity,” concludes Marie.

6,615 Women and girls surveyed | **15%** of travellers interviewed are women and girls (out of 45,000 interviews in 2018)

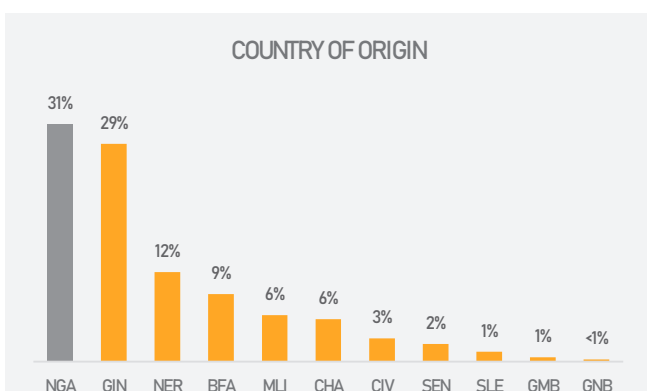
INTRODUCTION: While often overlooked, women and girls are important features of migration flows in West and Central Africa. Indeed, the share of female travellers in the region has grown significantly in the past few years. This document, based on data collected through the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), presents key figures on 6,615 women and girls surveyed in 2018 at 35 Flow Monitoring Points across seven countries.



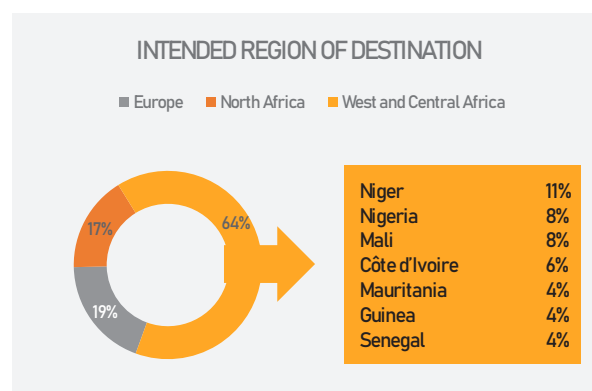
The largest number of women and girls were interviewed in Guinea (30% of all interviews with women and girls took place in Guinea). Significant numbers were also interviewed in Nigeria and Niger (respectively 23% and 14% of interviews were conducted in these two countries).



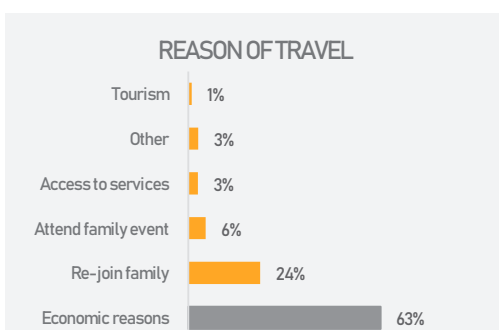
The majority of female travellers interviewed (81%) were 25 years or older. A significant share (19%) were under 25 years old, including 2% between 14 and 17 years old.



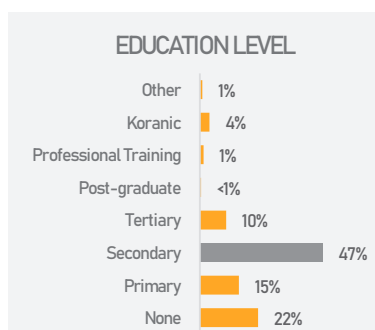
Respondents came from a wide range of West African countries. Nigeria (31%), Guinea (29%) and Niger (12%) were the three main countries of origins of female travellers interviewed.



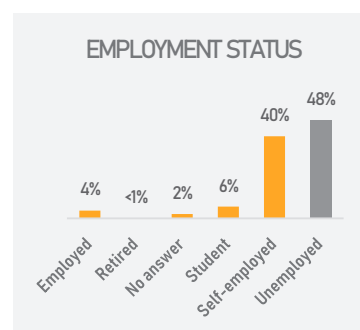
Female travellers primarily intended to reach a destination within the West and Central Africa region (64%), and in particular in Niger (11%), Nigeria (8%) and Mali (8%).



The main reason of travel of women and girls was economic (63%), such as selling or buying goods, searching for work opportunities and refilling stocks of merchandise. Family - related movements, such as joining family members or attending a family event, accounted for nearly 30% of flows.



The majority of female travellers interviewed (47%) had completed secondary education. This is a higher share than for male respondents (40%). However, a greater share of female respondents (22%) also declared having no education (18% among men).



The unemployment rate among female travellers was 48%. However, among unemployed respondents, a quarter indicated they were not looking for a employment at the date of interview.

Note: This factsheet is based on surveys conducted at the Flow Monitoring Points in West and Central Africa in 2018. These surveys are conducted by trained IOM enumerators in high transit areas in 7 countries (see map above). For more information, visit: migration.iom.int or contact IOM Regional Office Information Management unit: rodakarepcteam@iom.int



M'Baye Babacar Cissé. Photo: DR

"Sustainable peace in Côte d'Ivoire depends on strengthening social cohesion and national reconciliation"

After serving with the United Nations for forty years during a career spanning development and international cooperation, humanitarian coordination, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, M'Baye Babacar Cissé is now enjoying his retirement. Full of his customary energy, he agreed to share some of the professional and human experiences that have defined his career and his perspective on the role of the United Nations in a constantly changing world. Interview.

You spent several in Côte d'Ivoire as Resident Coordinator of the United Nations - what is your personal feeling about the role of the United Nations in this country?

I came to Côte d'Ivoire as Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (DSRSG) for the Peacekeeping Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in October 2013. At the same time, I was also the Resident Coordinator of the UN System (RC), Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and UNDP Resident Representative in Côte d'Ivoire (prior to the delinking process that took place in January 2019). These different roles and functions allowed me to be actively engaged as well as a privileged witness to the work of the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire.

Without a doubt, the UN played an essential role in ending the crisis and consolidating peace. Today, the contribution of UNOCI, and the transfer of residual activities to the Ivorian Government and the UN Country Team at the end of UNOCI's mandate, are cited as an example of good practice in the transition processes from 'peacekeeping' to 'peacebuilding.' - I am proud to have been involved in both of these stages.

Your work became even more important after the end of the mandate of the UNOCI mission. How would you judge the transition from a peacekeeping mission to a peacebuilding process?

The departure of UNOCI was a challenge for the Government, but also for the United Nations System and other development partners. To define a coherent response, we conducted a joint assessment of residual challenges, and, within the UN, identified a number of key UNOCI activities requiring consolidation, which were subsequently transferred to UN agencies. Critical areas included social cohesion and national reconciliation, the fight against gender-based violence, the rule of law, human rights and transitional justice, and community security.

These four areas of intervention are at the core of the Peacebuilding Support Program (PACoP), which is ongoing and is expected to come to an end in December 2020. Today, we can say the transition will be considered a success with the end of the PACoP, which has benefited from strong national ownership.

Due to its economic importance, Côte d'Ivoire remains a major player in the sub-region, as evidenced by the share of its GDP to the UEMOA and the logistics hub that is the harbor of Abidjan. Moreover, with nationals of the sub-region making up more than a quarter of its population, remittances from Côte d'Ivoire represent a major source of funding for several of its West African neighbors, including Burkina Faso and Mali. Thus, a successful process of transition and peace consolidation in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as its continued economic growth, are essential for the entire sub-region; conversely, in view of the current situation in the Sahel, a resurgence of instability in Côte d'Ivoire could lead to a significant economic and social decline in case of resurgence of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.

In your opinion, how can the United Nations concretely help Cote d'Ivoire to further consolidate peace and prevent renewed violence, especially in the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections?

Sustainable peace in Côte d'Ivoire depends on strengthening social cohesion and national reconciliation. These are long-term challenges, especially in countries emerging from deep crises. Continued support from the United Nations and other development partners in this area remains critical, especially in the run-up to the presidential elections of 2020. But we know that all Ivorians understand the high stakes involved in maintaining peace and stability.

Côte d'Ivoire is in a sub-Region with major security challenges - is regional security cooperation be the only response to address these challenges?

A closer look at the sub-region suggests that crises have been usually rooted in the most unstable border areas (Northern Mali, the Lake Chad Basin, the Burkina Faso / Mali / Niger border) taking advantage of the absence of state and ease of organizing the retreat following an attack. The crisis has only begun to spread within countries following instability in these border areas. Without regional security cooperation, including the pooling of military and civilian intelligence, it will be challenging to effectively address with these crises. Cooperation is all the more necessary because of the vastness of the territories con-



cerned - this is particularly the case in Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, but also the region around Lake Chad, particularly northern Cameroon and Nigeria, given its proximity to other crisis areas (Somalia, CAR ...). None of the States of the sub-region can manage these new threats on their own, due to their complexity, their geographic vastness and their cross-border nature.

Moreover, these threats exacerbate conflicts among communities that straddle one or more borders, and some community leaders encourage a cross-border alliances in the pursuit of resources and power. This situation, which is observed in some Sahel countries, is a threat to states authority and social cohesion. There is a need for regional cooperation in terms of security, but also in terms of local development. Without this strong regional cooperation, security efforts could take precedence over development, a scenario that we are beginning to see in some cases and could eventually lead citizens to question the legitimacy of the state.

From this perspective, I believe that tackling security challenges requires regional cooperation that takes into account the cross-border dimension, but also alleviates structural constraints of the defense and security forces of neighboring countries (such as limited human and material resources) to avoid 'contagion'. With the crisis in Mali and Libya, all countries in the sub-region, including Côte d'Ivoire, are facing security challenges. Since the terrorist threat transcends borders, sub-regional cooperation is imperative. But, as we often point out, the answer to this crisis cannot only be military. It is also necessary to tackle the root causes through inclusive

I believe that tackling security challenges requires of regional cooperation that takes into account the cross-border dimension

sustainable development. Youth employment must be central to the transformation processes of our countries.

In your various roles at the UN, you have worked extensively on development and governance issues. Do not you think that "development" has been neglected at the expense of "security" in the sub-region?

I do not think it can be said that development has been neglected to the detriment of security. Had the problems of governance and development been resolved, we might not see security problems of this magnitude.

In fact, there are serious governance problems that prevent some countries in the sub-region from getting out of underdevelopment and increase their fragility. Poor governance is often accompanied by rising corruption, weak rule of law and transparency, whose negative effects on income inequality and access to public services are now visi-

ble. The preponderant role of money in political processes has the potential to undermine the deepening of the ongoing democratization process in Africa. The negative impact of climate change on the sustainable livelihoods of communities is also important, as evidenced by the drying up of Lake Chad, whose area has decreased from 25,000 km² to about 3,000 km² at present.

If we limit ourselves to the G5-Sahel countries, the human development situation is worrying (Niger ranks 189th out of 189, Chad 186th, Burkina Faso 183rd, Mali 182nd, and Mauritania 152nd). The average share of GDP per capita in this group of countries is only about 37% of Africa's as a whole. Finally, this part of the continent remains characterized by one of the strongest demographic growth rates in the world, with a fertility rate exceeding 5 children per woman. These trends observed in the G5 Sahel countries also apply to the North of Nigeria and Cameroon, which are as well at the heart of the crisis

The low level of human development particularly affects young people. In the G5 Sahel countries alone, about 1.7 million young people enter the labor market each year, and less than 10% of them find employment in the formal sector because of limited employment opportunities and the lack of skills or profiles that match the needs of the market. This situation exposes these young people to insecurity that sometimes pushes them towards violent extremism and criminality or towards migration.



Reintegration of women returning from Liberia in Tonkpi region (Danane). Photo: UNHCR

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Particular
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Countries are thus stuck in a vicious circle, with governance problems that hinder development, which in turn limits opportunities, increases frustration, disrupts social cohesion, and therefore provides a fertile ground for insecurity. In order to prevent current threats to state authority, the current dynamic must be urgently reversed, especially since most of these countries have natural resources that can support inclusive and sustainable development. I believe that this requires a long-term vision and a structural transformation strategy supported by industrialization and well-chosen economic diversification.

From this perspective, particular attention should be paid to the development of human capital by promoting quality education, which can lead to employment. An emphasis should be placed on local governance in the context of effective decentralization and more effective provision of basic social services. I remain convinced, how-

ever, that the prerequisites for this positive dynamic lie in reinforcing governance in all its forms and accelerating the demographic transition. These issues have been widely debated in recent decades at the various World Summits (International Conference on Population and Development, World Summit on Social Development, World Conference on Women, World Food Summit ...), which led to the Millennium Declaration. All African countries have endorsed their resolutions, and should therefore take steps to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities, as stipulated in the African Union Agenda 2063.

As a Senegalese and as a member of the United Nations, you are very familiar with Africa and, above all, with West Africa. What message would you like to convey on the eve of your departure to the Ivorians, leaders [of this region] and actors and partners so that the prosperity of the peoples of the region becomes a reality?

I must begin by saying that we often focus on our weaknesses and failures, but the United Nations has accomplished a great deal in terms of peace and security. We would certainly have experienced more conflicts around the world had it not been for the key role played by the UN and the Security Council. In terms of development, which is the field in which I have been worked for almost 40 years, I must say that we have a lot of achievements. The great summits convened by the United Nations that I have just mentioned have played a key role. It is true that we have not been able to reduce inequalities or eradicate poverty in many regions and in Africa in particular. But diseases have been eradicated, education has become widespread, access to drinking water has improved dramatically, climate issues and the gender dimension are better taken into account in the development processes.

One aspect that is not often mentioned is the extensive capacity building in which the United Nations played a central role in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Policy Framework Papers of the IMF and the World Bank were usually developed by experts from these institutions and not by Africans themselves. The same is true of sectoral strategies and national development plans. Today all these development policy and strategy documents are developed by national governments. The countries of our sub-region face many challenges, but they have also embarked on courageous reforms that are a necessary condition of sustainable growth. Growth must also be better distributed to reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty. Governance remains a major challenge within this context and should not be reduced to slogans.

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With a constantly changing world and high quality human resource needs, It is important to prioritize the development of human capital in Africa.

With a constantly changing world and high quality human resource needs, I think it is important to prioritize the development of human capital in Africa. Not coincidentally, this was one of the major themes of the first International Conference on the Emergence of Africa organized in 2015 by Côte d'Ivoire with the support of UNDP. Finally, public administration must not be politicized, because it leads to the exclusion of competent managers, it affects the institutional memory of our administrations and their performance. We must also give priority to collective leadership, as Asian people have done so well.

M'Baye Babacar Cissé was Assistant Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Côte d'Ivoire. Formerly, he was Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for the UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) until the mission's closure in June 2017. Mr. Cissé's vast experience spans four decades in development, international cooperation, humanitarian coordination, conflict prevention, peace consolidation and inter-agency coordination, at both strategic and operational levels. He was previously Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Bureau for Africa in New York, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Burkina Faso, and UNDP Country Director in the DR Congo and has held a number of senior positions at the UNDP Headquarters. He has been a lead contributor to the process of UN reform, and to the development and implementation of regional initiatives on climate change and environment, democratic and economic governance and policies promoting women's empowerment and political participation. Most recently, Mr. Cissé coordinated the first two International Conferences on the Emergence of Africa (CIEA) and co-led the study on Sustainable Development and the Emergence of Africa presented at the COP 21.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNOWAS

- The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) is a special political mission managed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).
- UNOWAS engages in preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation in countries in West Africa and the Sahel. It also assists sub-regional institutions and States in strengthening their capacities in these areas, as well as in addressing cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security.
- The Office promotes good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention and conflict management initiatives.
- Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS. He is assisted by a Deputy SRSG, Ruby Sandhu-Rojon.
- To help address insecurity and promote sustainable development in the Sahel region, UNOWAS leads regional advocacy efforts for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which was endorsed by the Security Council in June 2013.
- Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas also serves as Chairperson of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), which was established to facilitate the implementation of the 2002 ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary dispute.
- The mandate of the Mixed Commission includes supporting the demarcation of the land boundary and delineation of the maritime boundary; facilitating the withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the transfer of authority to the Republic of Cameroon; addressing the situation of affected populations.
- UNOWAS works closely with other UN entities and several regional and international partners such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union, to promote an integrated approach to conflict prevention and regional issues
- UNOWAS covers 17 countries under its mandate: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and (Chad).
- Countries covered by the mandate of UNOWAS represent 7,428,527 square kilometers with a population of 339,158,813

HIGHLIGHT

West Africa and the Sahel, between security challenges and the need to consolidate peace

On 24 July 2019, the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, presented to the UN Security Council, the report of the Secretary-General on peace consolidation in West Africa and the Sahel. Overview of the major issues raised.

“Further progress has been made in democratic consolidation in West Africa and the Sahel. Such progress in the democratic space has not been linear nor without complications,” said Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), to Members of the Security Council, on 24 July 2019, during the presentation of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOWAS which covers the period from January to June 2019.

Successful elections especially in Nigeria, Senegal and Mauritania as well as political dialogues recently initiated mainly in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana show further progress made in the consolidation of democracy in the region. But despite these improvements, insecurity is prevalent in several areas of the region where it has even worsened.

“Addressing such potential sources of conflict remains a major priority ahead of the upcoming cycle of high-stake presidential elections in West Africa scheduled for next year in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Togo,” warned SRSG Ibn Chambas to the Security Council, while underlining human rights problems several countries in the region are facing, particularly through “the instrumentalization of the judiciary for political objec-



tives in some cases as well as a predominant sentiment of impunity for violent crimes, undermining respect for the rule of law.”

Security challenges and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel

SRSG Chambas also highlighted the volatile security situation in the entire Sahel, where escalating violence and insecurity have sparked an unprecedented humanitarian crisis leaving a total of 5.1 million Burkinabe, Nigeriens and Malians in need. In Burkina Faso, a total of 226 security incidents contributed to an accelerated displacement from 47,000 in December 2018 up to 220,000 internally displaced people and more than 25,000 refugees in June 2019, representing an almost five-fold increase.

“In the Lake Chad Basin, attacks by Boko Haram splinter groups continue to threaten the peace and stability of the region,” Ibn Chambas said. He urged “governments and partners to redouble their efforts in defining a concerted approach to prevent a further expansion of the terrorist threat and foster support to much-needed medium and long-term stabilization measures aligned to the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel”.

The Special Representative Ibn Chambas also called for an “enhanced support to the implementation of the Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin as well

as the Priority Investment Program of the Group of Five of the Sahel, along with a concerted effort to support national development plans” to boost development of the region.

Intercommunity conflicts

Echoing the Special Representative's presentation, the Security Council, in its statement of 07 August 2019, expressed its deep concern about the continued deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel region and calls for a continued regional and international engagement to help these countries to address the peace and security challenges they face. The Security Council emphasized that stability and security in Mali are inextricably linked to that of the Sahel and West Africa, as well as to that of Libya and North Africa.

For the challenging security situation in West Africa and the Sahel, notably threats posed by terrorism, maritime piracy, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, and transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, arms and drugs and illegal exploitation of natural resources, can be interlinked. Also, to combat inse-

curity in the region, the members of the Security Council called on ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel to identify areas of complementarity in preventing conflict and sustaining peace in the region.

The Security Council further expresses its deep concern about the intensification of intercommunal violence in Central Mali and Burkina Faso, and reiterates that stabilization of the situation and protection of civilians in this region requires a fully integrated response, led by the governments of those countries, with the support of UNOWAS and the international community, and encompassing simultaneous pursuit of progress on security, governance, humanitarian assistance and development.

Dialogue to prevent violence

The Security Council recalls the provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance that State Parties shall ensure that the process of amendment or revision of their constitution reposes on national consensus, obtained, if need be, through referendum and, while expressing concern about the increasingly polarized environment, calls

upon UNOWAS to encourage all political stakeholders to use dialogue to resolve their differences in that regard.

It further encourages the consolidation of ongoing political reforms in the region to prevent violence and instability, as well as progress in the area of national reconciliation in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It called national stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Togo to work together to facilitate the timely preparation for, and holding of genuinely free and fair, credible, timely and peaceful elections, and to take all appropriate steps to prevent violence.

In response to the enduring issues of development, humanitarian action, human rights and peace and security, the Security Council called for a more integrated and multisectoral approach. It stressed that this will also help address the root causes of crises, help vulnerable populations, including migrants and refugees, as well as prevent further tension and violence.

Role of women, efforts climate change

Recognizing the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters, including through drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity among other factors on the stability of West Africa and the Sahel region, the Security Council stressed the need for long-term strategies, based on risk assessments, by governments and the United Nations, to support stabilization and build resilience and encourages UNOWAS to continue to integrate this information in its activities.

Regarding the role of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peacebuilding as well as in post-conflict situations, the members of the Security Council highlighted the importance of the full, equal, and meaningful women participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

“The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), to achieve the Africa We Want”

The continental free trade agreement could help Africa create the largest free trade area in the world. The following text of the Economic Commission for Africa gives you an overview of the content of the project.

The African Continental Free Trade Area is one of the flagship projects of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan under the African Union Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want. The objective of the AfCFTA is to create a single continental market for goods and services, with further negotiations planned on the facilitation of intra-African investment, intellectual property and competition. The Agreement paves way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and, ultimately, African Economic Community as envisaged in the Abuja Treaty. Furthermore, the AfCFTA will help to harmonise Africa’s different trade regimes within the continent’s various Regional Economic Communities (RECs). There is no doubt that this will result in a substantial increase in intra-African trade, greater industrial production and a boost to the continent’s GDP (ECA, 2018, AfDB, 2019, ch.3 and IMF, 2019, ch. 3).

The AfCFTA will bring together 55 African Member States, whose combined gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated at more than US \$ 2.3 trillion as of 2018 (ECA, AfDB and AUC, 2019, p.85). African Leaders continue showing their commitments towards deeper regional integration as evidenced by the signing of the Kigali Declaration by 44 Afri-

can countries, during the 18th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Summit held in Kigali, 21 March 2018.

There are two protocols under the AfCFTA which are: (i) trade in goods and (ii) trade in services. Under trade in services, the Kigali Summit agreed to give priority to five sectors, namely: communication, financial, transport, tourism and professional services. During the same Summit, about 27 countries also signed African Union Protocol on Free Movement of People, that complements the African Continental Free Trade Area which will be key in boosting regional trade.

The Agreement is further buttressed by other continental initiatives such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the Single African Air Transport Market which will contribute to improving efficiency in continental air transportation and increasing Africa’s global share of the aviation industry. The pace of ratifications by African leaders is also remarkable. By 1st April 2019, only over a year after the signature, the threshold of 22 countries required for entry into force of the agreement had been reached. The continent marked another milestone on 30 May 2019 when the agreement entered into force. This fast-paced rati-

AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA CREATING ONE AFRICAN MARKET

#AfCFTA2018 | 17-21 March 2018 | Kigali, Rwanda



55 African Member States, whose combined gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated at more than US \$ 2.3 trillion as of 2018. Photo: DR

fication process is unprecedented in the AU treaty history and bodes well for the continent's integration agenda.

The multiple and overlapping membership of countries across RECs and trading arrangements means that more than half of intra-African trade in more than 70 per cent of African countries is already covered by existing FTA arrangements.

The launching of the operational phase- Niamey, Niger

After 3 years of tough negotiations, the African Union finally launched the “operational phase” of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Niamey was full of joy and happiness when African leaders officially launched the operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area on 7th July 2019, during the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union Heads of State and Government. This marked a “New Era in African's Integration” after the historic signing of the Agreement in Kigali, Rwanda.

This great moment happened after the deposit of the required minimum of 22 instruments of ratifi-

cation by AU member-states to the AU Commission on 30th May 2019. As of June 2019, five more instruments of ratification have since been deposited, bringing the total number of ratifications to 27 countries.

Nigeria, Africa's most-populated country and one of its biggest economies signed the AfCFTA Agreement during the Niamey Summit, adding even more significance to the official launching of the Free Trade Area. Benin Republic also appended its signature to the agreement during the Summit, bringing the total number to state signatories to 54, with Eritrea as the only member of the African Union that is yet to sign.

The next phase to be pursued involves negotiations on investment, intellectual property and competition, as well as achieving ratification of the Agreement by more African countries and more importantly, its effective implementation. Through AfCFTA, African states agreed to shared “rules of origin, the monitoring and elimination of non-tariff barriers, a unified digital payments system and an African trade observatory dashboard. The Agreement will be fully operational in one year after the launching (July 2020), giving countries time to adapt to the agreed changes.