

UN-World Bank Report “Pathway for Peace”
Regional Dissemination Seminar, Dakar 1-2 November 2018
SRSG Chambas, Opening Speech

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Guests,

Let me first warmly welcome you to this regional seminar to discuss the recently published United Nations – World Bank “Pathways for Peace” report.

The report, which stresses the need for a holistic approach to preventing conflicts, comes timely in a context of an increase in violent conflicts in the past years, worldwide. As pertains to our region, the concerning security situation West Africa and the Sahel has already reached the center of global attention. Multiple security threats in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, including armed conflict, civil unrest, illicit trafficking, local and community conflicts, irregular migration and terrorism have an impact far beyond our region. Violent extremism, often building on existing local conflicts, has gripped Mali and now threatens the stability of its neighbors Burkina Faso and Niger. Furthermore, in the Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram has launched a

new wave of deadly attacks in past months, which suggests renewed capacities of the groups.

Excellencies,

The prevailing security challenges in the region are exacerbated by poor governance, violations of basic human rights and an unsustainable population growth which aggravates existing pressure on natural resources and basic services.

Marginalisation of certain parts of the population furthermore continue to negatively affect the stability of the region and provides fertile grounds for violent extremism. In addition, tensions between herders and farmers in the region have reached a peak in the past two years, with an unprecedented level of violence in Mali and Nigeria.

As a result of these challenges, we are witnessing that effective state authority is diminishing in several areas of the region, as is the delivery of basic services like healthcare and education, while the humanitarian needs are rising: Alone in the Lake Chad Basin, we count today 2,4 million IDPs, while in July 12 million people, including 4,1 million children, in ten countries of the Sahel required emergency food assistance due to insufficient precipitation amongst other reasons.

Ladies and Gentleman,

In parallel to this concerning security environment, West Africa and the Sahel also shows positive developments. Democracy has advanced significantly over the last decade, and unconstitutional changes of governments are becoming a phenomenon of the past. In West Africa, regional organizations with ECOWAS in the lead, have developed strong institutional frameworks to hold governments accountable for their

commitments to democratic principles. Peaceful elections and constitutional transfers of power have become the norm and the technical aspects of organizing elections have improved. Nevertheless, a steady work on conflict prevention during electoral cycles remains necessary, while the constructive participation of women and youth groups during elections, which is key to democratic transformation, needs to be enhanced.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me highlight that as per the UN Charter, the United Nations has always prioritized conflict prevention efforts in its approach to addressing peace and security challenges. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has made conflict prevention his personal priority and continues to highlight the importance of moving from managing crises to preventing them from breaking out. While in some cases the response to rising tensions and even outbreaks of violence seems to be too timid, we have to collectively confront the root causes of conflict.

In this context, the United Nations continues to be committed to a holistic approach of “sustaining peace” by working with Governments at the national and sub-national level to strengthen governance institutions and structures, improve public service delivery, combat corruption, entrench decentralization, promote inclusive development and natural resource management, and to enhance urban governance and human settlements.

In our region, the United Nations therefore fully supports the Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin, which holistically encompasses the above-mentioned principles. Furthermore, our actions are guided by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and the recently launched UN Support Plan for the Sahel, which will be the subject of discussions tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding and ahead of the detailed presentation, which is next on the agenda, let me recall some of the 'Key Messages on Prevention' contained in the United Nations – World Bank "Pathways for Peace" report and which should guide our discussions throughout the next two days. Firstly, violent conflict has increased after decades of relative decline. Direct deaths in war, numbers of displaced populations, military spending, and terrorist incidents, among others, have all surged since the beginning of the century; secondly the cost of conflicts around the world requires all of those concerned to work more collaboratively; thirdly, the best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis, is to ensure that they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development; fourthly, the primary responsibility for preventive action rests with states, both through their national policy and the multilateral system; fifthly, political, economic and social exclusion creates fertile ground for conflict; six, economic growth and poverty alleviation are crucial but alone will not suffice to sustain peace; seven, inclusive decision making is fundamental to sustaining peace at all levels; and finally, in addition to efforts to build institutional capacity to contain violence when it does occur, acting preventively

entails fostering mechanisms that create incentives and a culture for peaceful resolution of conflict.

As per our mandate given by the UN Security Council, the work of UNOWAS, and my personal work in the region, is centered around conflict prevention. In this vein, I would finally like to emphasize my full support for the three core principles of prevention highlighted by the Pathways for Peace report: First, Prevention must be sustained over the time needed to address structural issues comprehensively, strengthen institutions, and adapt incentives for actors to manage conflict without violence. Second, Prevention must be inclusive and build broad partnerships across groups to identify and address grievances that fuel violence. And third, Prevention must proactively and directly target patterns of exclusion and institutional weaknesses that increase risk.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the conflict landscape becomes increasingly complex, we must also adapt our approaches to ensure that we are more responsive in addressing contemporary threats to peace and security. An important aspect of adapting our approaches is recognizing our respective comparative advantages, and effectively deploying our human and financial resources in a manner that promotes complementarity and minimizes duplication.

Partnerships in addressing any risk of an outbreak of conflict will continue to be key and must be built on a foundation of shared values, mutual respect and solidarity.

Finally, on behalf of the United Nations, I would like to reiterate our unwavering commitment to working with you to strengthen conflict prevention and peacemaking efforts, and thereby to ensure that West Africa and the Sahel attain the SDGs and the goals contained in Agenda 2063.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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