

## **33<sup>rd</sup> HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF HEADS OF UN PEACE MISSIONS IN WEST AFRICA**

### **COMMUNIQUE**

**Dakar, 3 December 2018** - At the invitation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Heads of the United Nations Missions in West Africa held their 33<sup>rd</sup> High-level Meeting on 3 December 2018 in Dakar, Senegal.

The objective was to provide insights and exchange views on peace and security dynamics in the areas of operation of the respective missions and within the West African region as a whole, and to strengthen coordination in order to enhance synergies to address common challenges.

In attendance were the Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), José Viegas Filho and for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas; and the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Mali (MINUSMA) Joanne Adamson. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa (UNOCA) François Loucény Fall and the United Nations Resident Coordinators for Côte d'Ivoire, Babacar Cissé, and Liberia, Yacoub El Hillo, also attended.

The Heads of Missions pointed to the recent security incidents in the region, and expressed their condolences to the families of victims, both civilian and military, including in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, well as in the Lake Chad Basin. They strongly condemned attacks against civilians and peacekeepers. They underlined the need for a multidimensional regional approach to address the root causes of insecurity and called for enhanced cooperation amongst all relevant actors and concerned governments.

1. The Heads of Missions welcomed the municipal and regional elections held in Côte d'Ivoire on 13 October, in a largely peaceful atmosphere, whilst condemning related acts of violence. The Heads of Missions expressed concern over the tense political climate defined by an increased polarization between the main political parties in the aftermath of the municipal and regional elections. They called on all the parties to continue and strengthen political dialogue in the lead-up to the 2020 general elections, and to embark into a consensual and inclusive reform of the Independent Electoral Commission.
2. The Heads of Missions expressed concerns at the ongoing tensions and violence in Guinea and called on all actors to refrain from violence and engage in constructive dialogue to resolve their differences ahead of upcoming legislative and presidential elections.
3. The Heads of Missions took note of the delays in the legislative election process in Guinea-Bissau and called on the authorities to announce a new polling date as soon as possible. They stressed the importance for all the Bissau-Guinean authorities and political actors to display good faith and political will at this critical juncture. The Heads of Missions commended the good offices role of UNIOGBIS and welcomed the continued efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). They underscored that the implementation of the Conakry Agreement remains crucial to pave the way for the long-awaited institutional reforms and to peace and stability in the country. The Heads of Missions recognized the contributions of the ECOWAS security mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) in promoting stability and commended the decision of the ECOWAS Authority to extend its mandate until August 2019.
4. The Heads of Missions commended Liberia for the peaceful transition from one democratically-elected government to another and reiterated the importance of continued progress in maintaining peace and security, including conflict prevention and reconciliation. They commended the UN Country Team's coordinated support to Liberia following the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia. The strong partnership between the UN, the AU and ECOWAS, particularly on conflict prevention and good offices was commended. The Heads

of Missions called on the international community to continue its support to Liberia to further enhance peace consolidation and sustainable development.

5. The Heads of Missions took note of the reelection of the outgoing President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, on 12 August 2018, and stressed the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement to firmly anchor Mali on the path of stability and lasting peace, noting that a number of critical reforms and elections are anticipated in 2019.
6. On Nigeria, the Heads of Missions deplored the attacks and the current rise in the violent activities of the Boko Haram insurgency as well as the killings in the Middle Belt. They expressed the hope for a transparent, credible and peaceful election, and commended UNOWAS for its good offices which will intensify in the run up to the elections, including joint programming with the National Peace Committee.
7. The Heads of Missions noted the upcoming elections in Senegal and welcomed the relatively peaceful campaign. Recalling Senegal's tradition of upholding democracy through the conduct of free, fair and credible elections, they encouraged the holding of credible and peaceful presidential elections in February 2019.
8. The Heads of Missions also expressed concerns at the large number of unresolved petitions filed in court by Sierra Leonean parliamentarians on constitutional and electoral matters, highlighting the volatility of the political environment and threatening national cohesion.
9. The Heads of Missions commended ECOWAS for its various efforts to address the political crisis in Togo including the roadmap of 31 July which set up a follow-up committee for its implementation. They commended the Co-Facilitators, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana and President Alpha Conde of Guinea, for their efforts at finding a solution to the crisis. They equally appealed to Togolese stakeholders to put the interest of their nation above all sectional interest, exercise restraint and seek peaceful means to address grievances.
10. Participants commended the steady progress registered on the UN transition processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, while calling for further reinforcement of UN country teams and greater international community support towards addressing remaining gaps.
11. The Heads of Missions indicated that, although the conduct of elections in the region continues to improve, pre and post electoral periods continue to be characterized by tensions. In this regard, they called on authorities and national stakeholders to work together to ensure a level playing field and help create an environment that is conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in Benin, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal.
12. The Heads of Missions noted the progress made towards the operationalization of the G5 Sahel Joint Force as recently welcomed by the Security Council during its press communique of 13 November. They emphasized that a multidimensional approach and respect for human rights are essential to the success of military operations.
13. The Heads of Missions remain deeply concerned about the situation in the centre of Mali. In this regard, they advocate for a better alignment with the Sahel Support Plan developed this year, which is aimed at promoting coherence, synergies and coordination in the context of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). This collaborative approach would increase multiplier effects to strengthening, *inter alia*, governance, resilience and security. They further noted the importance of ensuring that populations and communities are at the center of the efforts of Governments as well as regional and international partners. In this regard, they welcomed the recalibration of UNISS and the adoption of the UN Support Plan for the Sahel. The Heads of Missions stressed the importance of a continuous resource mobilization for both, security operations as well as development and humanitarian programmes in the framework of the UN Support Plan for the Sahel.
14. While saluting the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Heads of Missions expressed serious concern over the continued fragility of the security situation the Lake Chad Basin countries as well as for the high number of IDPs (2.4 million), often in distressing conditions. They welcomed the recently adopted Regional Stabilisation Strategy for countries affected by the Boko Haram crisis and the successful Donor Conference held on 3 September in Berlin as a solid basis to tackle this scourge. The Heads of Missions encouraged donors to speed up the disbursement of their pledges.

15. The Heads of Missions took note of the briefing on the situation in Central Africa and the peace, security, governance and socioeconomic challenges facing the sub-region, including in relation to electoral processes. They welcomed efforts made by regional States and organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to overcome these challenges and called for continued and concerted actions to address trans-regional threats. In this connection, they commended ECCAS and ECOWAS' Heads of State and Government for the successful holding of their joint Summit on 30 July 2018 and reiterated the commitment of the UN to support the implementation of the Summit decisions. In this context, they agreed to continue to support the two sub-regional organizations in the finalization and thereafter implementation of the related joint action plan.
16. The Heads of Missions recognized that threats posed by the continued presence of perpetrators of transnational organized crime, drug traffickers and terrorist organizations in the region require increased and coordinated efforts by the United Nations and other international partners in support of national authorities.
17. The meeting welcomed regional initiatives aimed at addressing persistent challenges to governance, security, humanitarian needs, and human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, in West Africa and the Sahel. The meeting also recognized the progress achieved on gender equality in the region and further encouraged women's participation in political and peacebuilding processes.
18. The Heads of Missions welcomed the adoption of the peace and security, development and management reforms, stressing that they present an opportunity to further strengthen their collaboration and joint engagement for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
19. The Heads of Missions agreed to continue to cooperate and to strengthen information-sharing between their missions on key issues affecting the region.
20. Participants expressed their gratitude to SRSG Mohammed Ibn Chambas for hosting the meeting and agreed to hold their next meeting in Guinea-Bissau.