

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

UNOWAS AND ECOWAS ORGANIZE THE FIRST ANNUAL REGIONAL YOUTH FORUM FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

Ouagadougou, 12 December 2018- As part of the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), which call on States to take measures to prevent the radicalization of youth and invest in youth, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Youth and Sports Development Centre (CDJS), jointly organized the first annual Youth Regional Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, from 10 to 12 December 2018.

Beyond the points outlined in the two resolutions, the objective of this first Forum was to discuss the challenges that block the participation of young women and men in decision-making processes, and to define effective strategies to improve youth engagement in the areas of peace and security and development.

Recalling the need to mobilize States in the subregion to involve young people more closely in conflict resolution and development processes, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, said at the opening ceremony that "together we must redouble our efforts to continue to support this and other initiatives that strengthen the role of young women and men in West Africa and the Sahel".

For his part, ECOWAS President, Dr Jean Claude Kassi BROU, represented by the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Burkina Faso, Mohamed DIAKITE, stated that "the first annual Regional Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel is part of the concerted efforts between ECOWAS and the United Nations to find new alternatives for peace and security solutions by involving and listening to the most active and dynamic population in our region, THE YOUTH".

Echoing the call of the Head of UNOWAS, some 100 participants representing ECOWAS and Sahelian countries discussed during three days important themes related to the definition of the role of youth, and the commitments of various technical and financial partners to help improve youth participation in peace and development processes.

This first Forum was also the opportunity to present a study commissioned by UNOWAS on the theme "Young women and men in peace and development processes in West Africa and the Sahel" which was examined by the participants for its final validation.

The work undertaken during the three days of the Forum resulted in a series of major recommendations contained in the "Ouagadougou Declaration of Youth for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel" for the effective participation of young people in the consolidation of peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

The Annual Regional Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel was attended by the Mayor of Ouagadougou, the Dean and representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited to Burkina Faso, the youth representative of the sub-region, and representatives of ECOWAS and the United Nations system in Burkina Faso.