



Bureau des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel

UNOWAS

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

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PRESS RELEASE

Briefing of the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel to the Security Council: “Despite positive political developments, the region continues to witness a devastating surge in terrorist attacks”

Dakar, 09 January 2020- Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) briefed, yesterday, the Security Council on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOWAS.

While the security situation continues to worsen in the region, positive political developments have been achieved in several countries thanks to the mobilization of the governments, and the support of regional and international partners.

Highlighting the impact of the deterioration of the security situation, the Special Representative said “the past months, we have witnessed a devastating surge in terrorist attacks against civilian and military targets in the region. And humanitarian consequences are alarming”. He noted that “in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, casualties from terrorist attacks have increased five-fold since 2016 with over 4,000 deaths reported in 2019 as compared to estimated 770 deaths in 2016”. He also informed that “the geographic focus of terrorist attacks has shifted eastwards from Mali to Burkina Faso and is increasingly threatening West African coastal States.”

He also warned that “farmer-herder clashes remain some of the most violent local conflicts in the region,” and that it is important to ensure peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Whilst assuring the members of the Security Council that “governments, local actors, regional organizations and the international community are mobilizing across West Africa and the Sahel to respond to terrorism and violent extremism,” SRSR Ibn Chambas stressed that “now is the time for action” and urged regional and sub-regional leaders “to follow through on the pledges made and international partners to lend their full support.”

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2020 is another important year for the consolidation of democratic gains in the region as six countries will hold presidential elections. In this regard, SRSO Ibn Chambas urged that “any outstanding pre- and post- electoral grievances be addressed using legal channels.”

In Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Niger where polls will be also organized this year, the Special Representative cautioned that “unresolved grievances, unfinished national reconciliation, and sentiments of manipulation of institutions and processes carry risks of tensions and manifestations of political violence.”

Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas expressed his satisfaction regarding the positive political developments in many parts of West Africa and the Sahel, especially, national dialogues which are taking place in several countries. He congratulated “the people of Guinea-Bissau and the Electoral Commission for the exemplary conduct of the presidential elections, which marks an important step forward in Guinea Bissau’s democratic development.” He also reiterated his call “for national stakeholders of Guinea to overcome their differences in the spirit of building consensus in order to ensure the holding of legislative elections scheduled for February 2020.”

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel thanked the members of the of the Security Council for their continuous engagement in West Africa and the Sahel, and their firm commitment to economic development, peace and security.

The full statement of the SRSO Mohamed Ibn Chambas is available on our website:

<https://unowas.unmissions.org/briefing-security-council-report-secretary-general-activities-united-nations-office-west-africa-7>

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