



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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INFORMATION NOTE

THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE BRIEFED THE UN PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION IN A VIRTUAL MEETING ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

There is a need for concerted efforts to ensure that there is consensus in addressing the implications of COVID-19 on the electoral process

Dakar, 22 April 2020- The Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mohamed Ibn Chambas, briefed, on 22 April 2020, in a virtual meeting the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission on the Impact of COVID-19 in West Africa and the Sahel. The Ambassadorial-level meeting aimed at discussing the impact of COVID-19 and ways to support the national and regional efforts to fill critical funding gaps that have emerged due to the pandemic, while sustaining peace gains in the region.

In his remarks, the Special Representative Mr. Ibn Chambas stated that the pandemic is expected to severely impact high stake electoral processes planned for the later part of this year especially presidential elections in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Niger. "There is a need for concerted efforts to ensure that there is consensus in addressing the implications of COVID-19 on the electoral process", he warned.

Talking about the growing humanitarian needs in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin region, SRSG Ibn Chambas stressed the need to maintain attention on these issues as the pandemic is being addressed. "As shown from the recent attacks by Boko Haram and ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, the violent extremists will exploit any gaps" he declared.

The issue of the support needed by countries of the region towards sustainable peace and development, was also discussed. Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas advocated, inter alia, for the continuation of bilateral and multilateral support for humanitarian assistance as well as efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. The Special Representative also underlined the necessity to support the meaningful participation of communities including women, youth and persons with disabilities, traditional, religious and civic leaders in decision making processes.

"Business continuity of the West Africa and Sahel governments is a key area that we should be supporting, targeting key areas beyond health, but also those that will reinforce peace and stability" said Mr. Ibn Chambas.

Bureau de la Communication Stratégique et de l'Information Publique / Strategic Communications and Public Information Office

Kouider Zerrouk, Chef de bureau / SCPIO Chief - (+221) 33 869 85 60 / 77 332 49 28 - zerrouk@un.org
Angelita Mendy Diop, Chargée de communication / Public Information Officer - (+221) 33 869 85 47 / 76 721 78 92 - mendya@un.org
Cheikh A. Bamba Seye, Webmaster - Community Manager - (+221) 33 869 85 26 / 76 477 35 53 - seyec@un.org

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Ngor, route de la plage - PO Box 23 851, Dakar Ponty (Sénégal)