



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:

“UNOWAS will continue to engage national authorities to ensure a holistic approach and work towards broadening social support, inclusivity and national cohesion”

Dakar, 09 July 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, today, the United Nations Security Council on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOWAS.

The COVID-19 pandemic which is severely impacting an already precarious security situation “is likely to exacerbate existing conflict drivers with implications for peace and stability in the region,” warned the Special Representative during his briefing to the UN Security Council.

Highlighting the deterioration of the security situation, the Special Representative said that “recent months have witnessed recurrent complex terrorist attacks against the civilian population and security forces.” He noted that in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, “attacks have been accompanied by forced recruitment of children and abductions while exacerbating the humanitarian consequences on the populations of the affected areas.” Mr. Ibn Chambas voiced Human rights groups’ concerns over alleged abuses by self-defense militias and by security and defense forces, as some communities have resorted to them for protection, and urged authorities to do their utmost to ensure respect of human rights principals.

The Special Representative encouraged the United Nations System to “remain committed to working with all partners in order to enhance a more holistic and sustainable approach towards latent ethnic animosities and the absence of the State in peripheral areas,” emphasizing the fact that these challenges are being used by terrorist groups to advance their agenda. In this regard, SRSG Ibn Chambas reiterated UNOWAS commitment to support ECOWAS in the implementation of its 2020-2024 action plan for the eradication of terrorism in the sub-region and advocated for an increased support to the full operationalization of the African Union - Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin while accelerating the implementation of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). He also stressed the crucial need for “coordination amongst the various initiatives aimed at addressing development, peace and security challenges in the region is crucial.”

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SRSG Ibn Chambas also updated members of the security Council on the COVID-19 pandemic which has implications on the peace and security environment in the region as well as on the human rights, the rule of law and gender. “We are also experiencing the direct impact of the pandemic on the governance structures and systems including the provision of healthcare; electoral processes; political dialogue processes; youth; violent extremism and other security threats; the humanitarian situation; the socio-economic situation; and regional and multilateral engagements,” he said. The Special Representative reiterated that “UNOWAS will continue to engage national authorities to ensure a holistic approach and work towards broadening social support, inclusivity and national cohesion.” “We will also continue our advocacy to ensure a human rights-based approach in the response by States in the region,” he added.

In this second half of 2020, presidential elections will be organized in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Niger. The special Representative highlighted the need for consensus to address any challenges and disruptions including those linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. “It is worth noting that, the pandemic led to the suspension or postponement of preparations for the elections, including voters’ registration, in some of these countries. These preparations have resumed and stakeholders in the various countries have maintained their determination to hold elections as scheduled” he stated.

The Secretary General report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel is available on our website: <https://unowas.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sGREportwestafrica.pdf>

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