



PRESS RELEASE

WOMEN IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL ASSESS THE IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL OF UN RESOLUTIONS 1325 (2000) AND SUBSEQUENT ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE REGION

Dakar, 12 February 2021 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, today, 12 February 2021, chaired the Regional Open Day on the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent on Gender, Women, Youth, Peace and Security.

Held under special conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the eleventh edition of the Open Day brought together virtually more than a hundred women and young leaders from West Africa and the Sahel, including those from the rural zones, as well as actors from civil society organizations, representatives of regional organizations, with the participation of Mrs. Hawa Béavogui, Minister of Women's Rights and Empowerment of the Republic of Guinea; Ms. Siga Fatima Jagne, Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Ms. Medina Wesseh, Secretary-General of the Mano River Union; and Ms. Oulimata Sarr, UN Women Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

The objective this year's Open Day was to assess the level of awareness and implementation of UN Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent on women, peace and security, and to identify ways to accelerate action at the community level.

In his opening address, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, said that "with the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has serious consequences in terms of growing inequalities, the increased vulnerability of women, which exacerbates the already multiple threats to peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel regions for geostrategic and political reasons, we can anticipate the concerns and challenges facing women at the local, rural and community levels." While recalling the importance of women's contributions to creating resilient and

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peaceful societies, Mr. Ibn Chambas reiterated the commitment of the United Nations and ECOWAS "to give priority to the protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of women and girls, particularly those living in rural areas.

For her part, Mrs. Siga Fatima Jagne of ECOWAS said that "despite the significant progress that has been made in West Africa and the Sahel on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, as evidenced by the evaluation and impact assessment survey conducted last year, the region is still facing serious security problems. Violent extremism, radicalism and terrorism have considerably expanded their borders over the years and have taken on various dimensions that have serious implications for human security, especially for women and girls. "Ms. Jagne therefore called for "a focus on finding innovative ways to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, to facilitate their active participation in peace and security processes and, finally, to place women and youth at the heart of the development process.

The Secretary-General of the Mano River Union, Ms. Medina Wesseh, underlined the importance to deepen MRU's partnership with the United Nations system, most especially UNDP, as well as with ECOWAS to improve the socio-economic conditions of women at borders community to build and secure peace in our sub region"

The Regional Director of UN Women, Ms. Oulimata Sarr, gave an update on women's involvement in peace processes and the engagement of UN Women: "We join the women participating in this open day to call on the senior representatives of UNOWAS and ECOWAS to continue to be "HeForShe" and to be women's emissaries to the Heads of State and Government of the region for the improvement of their economic and social status, their level of representation in decision-making spheres and the eradication of the violence and discrimination they continue to suffer".

Echoing the various interventions of the participants, the Special Representative reiterated in his closing remarks UNOWAS continued engagement to work hand in hand with regional partners to advance women, youth and girls rights, and enhance their participation in decision making processes.

Organized since 2010 by UNOWAS, in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the G5 Sahel, the Mano River Union (MRU), peace missions, UN Women and other UN entities in the region, The Regional Open Days are a platform where women and young leaders share with senior officials of the UN and regional organizations their experiences, concerns and priorities in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security.

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