



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

UNOWAS

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Ensemble pour la paix

Together for peace

36th HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF HEADS OF UN PEACE MISSIONS IN WEST AFRICA

PRESS RELEASE

Dakar, 15 November 2021 - At the invitation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Heads of the United Nations Missions in West Africa/Sahel held the 36th High-level Meeting on 15 November 2021 in Dakar, Senegal, with the participation of United Nations Office for Central Africa.

The objectives of the meeting were

- i. to share insights and exchange views on peace and security dynamics in the areas of operation of the respective missions, and,
- ii. to strengthen coordination in order to provide effective UN response to the expansion of terrorism activities towards countries along the Gulf of Guinea coast and growing inter communal tensions i.e., farmer-herders.

Principals attending the meeting included The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa (UNOCA) François Louncény Fall; the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Mali (MINUSMA); El Ghassim Wane, the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel Abdoulaye Mar Dieye; and the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mahamat Saleh Annadif. Also, in attendance were the United Nations Resident Coordinators for Benin - Salvator Niyonzima; Burkina Faso - Barbara Manzi; Niger - Louise Aubin; and Senegal - Siaka Coulibaly. The UN Development Coordination Office in Africa was also represented.

Discussions focused on the political, socio-economic and security trends in West Africa and the Sahel and their impact on neighboring regions including the Central African region. The participants took note of the worsening security situation in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as in the Lake Chad Basin. They underlined the need for a multidimensional and regional approach to address the root causes of insecurity and called for enhanced cooperation amongst all relevant actors and concerned governments.

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

Alpha Ciré Kane, Public Information Assistant / Webmaster - (+221) 869 8585 / 77 528 0985 - alpha.kane@un.org

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1. The Heads of Mission expressed deep concerns over the violence against the civilian population, mostly women and children, and security and defense forces. They deplored that, in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, terrorist armed groups have expanded their presence, despite continued efforts by the respective governments, leading to unprecedented numbers of internally displaced persons. They applauded the collective resolve within the Accra Initiative to enhance stronger cross-border partnership. The participants commended the ongoing political dialogues in Niger and Cote d'Ivoire and encouraged constructive exchanges between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Guinea/Mali transition authorities for a return to constitutional order.
2. On Mali, Heads of Mission took note of the communique issued by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government during their 7 November. They encouraged the Transitional Authorities to work with ECOWAS towards the early finalization of a timetable outlining all the steps to be taken for the swift holding of elections.
3. Acknowledging that the stabilization of Mali is also very much contingent upon the full implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation and stabilization of the Centre region, Heads of Mission stressed the need for the Malian Parties to reach agreement on the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) framework. They welcomed the Government's recent proposal to integrate 13,000 combatants in 2021 and another 13,000 over the next two to three years as a good starting point for the successful implementation of a comprehensive DDR as provided for in the peace agreement. They commended the ongoing efforts by the transition authorities to develop a strategy aimed at improving the security situation in Central region, including by reducing intercommunal violence, and ensuring effective state presence in affected areas.
4. On the efforts of the G5-Sahel Joint Force, Heads of Mission called for a greater pooling of resources among the G5 countries to enhance the efficacy of the Joint Force.
5. The Heads of Missions noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Government of Benin on improving access to social services. They also encourage the ongoing efforts of the UN Country Team and Resident Coordinator to work with the Government to address risks related to violent extremism in the region and to build the resilience of border communities.
6. The Heads of Mission noted the measures taken by the Government of Burkina Faso to address the root causes of terrorism, notably the ongoing national reconciliation and social cohesion process, as well as through the holistic security sector reform. The Heads of Mission also encourage dialogue with all stakeholders through community-based and traditional settings aimed at addressing persistent instability across the country.
7. The Heads of Mission paid a particular attention to Niger's efforts to sustain social cohesion and territorial integrity, notably through the actions of the *Haute Autorité pour la Consolidation de la Paix*, a key institution supported by international partners and the United

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Nations to operationalize peace building initiatives with youth and women. The Heads of Missions lauded the work of the *Commission Electorale Nationale Independante* which enabled inclusive elections across the country.

8. The Heads of Mission welcomed the ongoing Political Dialogue in Senegal. They expressed satisfaction about the important milestones achieved so far and noted that a consensual agreement on a new electoral code ahead of the local elections could further consolidate Senegal's track record of democratic governance. They welcomed the Government's efforts towards job creation through the Emergency Programme for jobs creation and socio-economic insertion of women and youth. In addition, they commended the ongoing prevention measures to address any potential risk of terrorism in border areas. They encouraged efforts to promote good governance and stability in line with the *Plan Senegal Emergent*, with the support the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Country Team and development partners.
9. The Heads of Mission reiterated the need for the United Nations to continue working closely with ECOWAS, the African Union (AU) and other regional and sub-regional institutions. The equally called on ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to intensify their interactions including on maritime security and in the implementation o the Regional Strategy for Stabilization.
10. The Heads of Missions took note of the recommendation made by the Conference of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to revise and adapt the ECOWAS additional protocol on democracy and good governance. They commended this positive step towards the consolidation of democratic governance in the region.
11. While commending the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the G5 Sahel Force and Security and Defense Forces of conflict-affected countries, the Heads of Mission expressed their concerns over a cycle of intercommunal violence, gender-based violence, kidnapping for ransom, and herder-farmer clashes; and the corresponding challenging humanitarian situation in Lake Chad Basin countries. The Heads of Mission stressed the need for a holistic approach to addressing the challenges posed by terrorist organizations other illegal actors by focusing on security concerns, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and good governance, while encouraging adequate funding for humanitarian action for the efficient implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization (RSS).
12. The Heads of Mission took note of the briefing by SRSF Fall on the situation in Central Africa and efforts by member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to promote peace, stability, gender equality, good governance and socioeconomic development in the sub-region. They reiterated the UN commitment to provide continued support to the ECCAS Commission in the implementation of its five-year strategic vision and peace and security priorities. They commended UNOCA and UNOWAS for their joint efforts to raise awareness of the situation in the Lake Chad basin and mobilize enhanced political and financial support to the Multinational Joint Task Force and the implementation of the

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Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. They also welcomed the determination of the two regional offices to continue working closely with ECCAS and ECOWAS in support of the implementation of the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability, and the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Central and West Africa. They committed to further support the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Maritime Safety and Security in Central and West Africa.

13. The Heads of Missions took note of the conclusions of the 12th Steering Committee Meeting of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), held in Dakar, Senegal, on 3-4 November 2021. They recalled the various declarations of the Security Council and ECOSOC on the centrality of UNISS and for its integrated implementation. They also called on the African Union and all stakeholders to give fullest support to the implementation of the UNISS. They reiterated their commitment to continue mobilizing in support for the ministerial coordination platform.
14. The Heads of Mission urged governments and relevant stakeholders to continue improving the legislative and institutional framework for the respect of human rights which are key to democratic consolidation. The meeting also recognized efforts to promote gender equality in the region but called for significant progress especially, with regards to women's effective participation in political and peacebuilding processes at all levels, as well as real implementation of laws and national budget allocation for the implementation of national action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).
15. The Heads of Mission commended the governments of Cameroon and Nigeria for the progress made in the implementation of recommendations of the Cameroun-Nigeria Mixed Commission. The also expressed satisfaction at the holding of the meeting of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission from 19-20 November in Yaoundé.
16. The Heads of Mission agreed to continue to reinforce their cooperation in governance-related areas, as well as strengthening information-sharing between their missions respective:
17. Participants expressed their gratitude to SRSG Mahamat Saleh Annadif for hosting the meeting and agreed that the venue of the next meeting will be in Bamako in May 2022.

END

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