



58th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

Remarks by Mohamed Ibn Chambas Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS

Dakar, 23 January 2021

Your Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana and Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS Member States;

Your Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Your Excellency Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to participate in this 58th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. It is also my pleasure to convey warm greetings from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, who wishes you a successful session.

On 11 January, I briefed the United Nations Security Council on recent developments in West Africa and the Sahel. I highlighted amongst others, developments on elections and the state of democracy and governance in the

region; the security situation, particularly the developments in the Sahel, the Lake Chad basin, and maritime security; and the impact of COVID-19 in our region.

On elections and the state of democracy and governance in the region, since your last session in September, a number of political developments have illustrated the determination of the governments and people of West Africa to enhance the consolidation of peace and democracy in the region. These developments have included the conduct of five high-stake presidential elections in the last quarter of 2020.

These polls saw the re-election of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in Burkina Faso, President Alassane Dramane Ouattara in Cote d'Ivoire, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in Ghana, and President Alpha Condé in Guinea, while the first round of the presidential elections took place in Niger. I congratulate their Excellencies for their re-election, and President Mahamadou Issoufou, his Government and people of Niger for the successful conduct of the first round of the presidential election.

While these polls were generally conducted successfully, disagreements and tensions, sometimes leading to violence and the loss of lives, characterized some of the electoral processes. This is a demonstration that elections continue to be a source of conflict principally due to the lack of consensus in addressing contentious issues around them.

It is therefore crucial to ensure that in the post-electoral phase, dialogue is prioritized to resolve political differences and build consensus and ensure inclusiveness in governance. I am very encouraged by the positive signs and initiatives already taken in some of the concerned countries.

As several other countries prepare for various elections in the coming months, including presidential elections in Benin and Niger (second round), legislative elections in Cabo Verde and Cote d'Ivoire, and a constitutional referendum in The Gambia, the United Nations in close collaboration with ECOWAS and other partners, will continue to support the efforts of these countries to ensure that these polls contribute in the consolidation of democracy in the region.

I wish to reiterate that electoral and indeed political processes anchored on consensus and inclusiveness with full participation of women, youth and people living with disabilities, can significantly contribute to prevent conflicts and address some of the peace and security challenges in our region.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Sur la question de la sécurité, au cours de mon briefing au Conseil de Sécurité, j'ai souligné les récentes attaques répétées contre des cibles civiles et militaires dans certaines parties du Sahel et du bassin du lac Tchad, qui continuent de provoquer des déplacements de population, et entraînent la fermeture constante

d'infrastructures de santé et d'éducation. Le Burkina Faso, le Mali, le Niger et le Nigeria sont les pays particulièrement touchés.

Pour faire face à ces défis, les Nations Unies encouragent la CEDEAO à accélérer la mise en œuvre de son plan d'action 2020-2024 pour l'éradication du terrorisme dans la sous-région. Nous encourageons notamment le renforcement de la coordination entre ce plan, la stratégie régionale pour la stabilisation du bassin du lac Tchad et la Stratégie intégrée des Nations Unies pour le Sahel (UNISS), pour assurer une approche globale et une stabilisation à long terme.

J'ai aussi fait part aux Membres du Conseil de Sécurité de mes préoccupations face à la montée de l'insécurité dans le Golfe de Guinée. En effet, selon le Bureau Maritime International, au plan mondial, 90 pour cent des incidents de piraterie maritime et 95 pour cent de kidnappings en mer se produisent dans le Golfe de Guinée.

Nous devrions renforcer nos efforts pour relever le défi de la sécurité maritime ainsi que d'autres défis sécuritaires auxquels notre région est confrontée.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Concernant la pandémie de Covid-19, j'ai mis l'accent sur son impact dans la vie politique, sécuritaire et socioéconomique de nos populations. J'ai également fait le point sur les réponses au COVID-19 aux niveaux nationaux, ainsi qu'au niveau régional, sous la direction du Président Muhammadu Buhari, Champion de la CEDEAO pour la réponse à la pandémie, qui ont été jusqu'à présent remarquables.

Nous devons rester vigilants et ne pas relâcher nos efforts parce que la pandémie est encore là et bien là. J'encourage vivement la mise en œuvre coordonnée des protocoles COVID-19, et des décisions correspondantes, y compris en ce qui concerne les frontières terrestres, tout en appliquant les mesures de la CEDEAO à cet égard.

Pour permettre à nos pays de mieux relever le défi de la pandémie, je me fais l'écho du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, Antonio Guterres, pour solliciter la solidarité internationale en particulier pour les pays à faible revenus et les moins développés, pendant cette pandémie.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations supports and encourages concerted national, regional and international efforts to address the several other challenges facing West Africa, including issues related to governance; climate change; Security Sector Reform; drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.



We also continue to underscore the need to improve the overall situation of human rights and promoting the rule of law, as well as promoting the role of women and youth: principles which are dear to ECOWAS and to the United Nations.

Particular attention must be paid to post-conflict countries such as Guinea Bissau, where the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) closed on 31 December 2021 after the completion of its mandate.

A tripartite mechanism involving UNOWAS, ECOWAS and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Guinea Bissau has subsequently been established to continue to accompany Guinea-Bissau in its efforts to fully implement the urgent reforms outlined in the ECOWAS Road Map and the Conakry Agreement, as well as to achieve sustainable peace and development in the country.

I wish to, once again, renew the solidarity and commitment of UNOWAS, in particular, and the UN in general, to working with ECOWAS to achieve our common aspirations and objectives. This was encouraged by Members of the Security Council who also commended the exemplary partnership between ECOWAS and UNOWAS during my recent briefing to the Council.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je vous souhaite des discussions fructueuses et puisque nous sommes encore en début d'année, je souhaite aux Excellences Chefs d'Etat et de Gouvernement, ainsi qu'aux peuples de tous les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest, une très bonne et heureuse année 2021.

Merci de votre aimable attention.

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