



UNOWAS Magazine

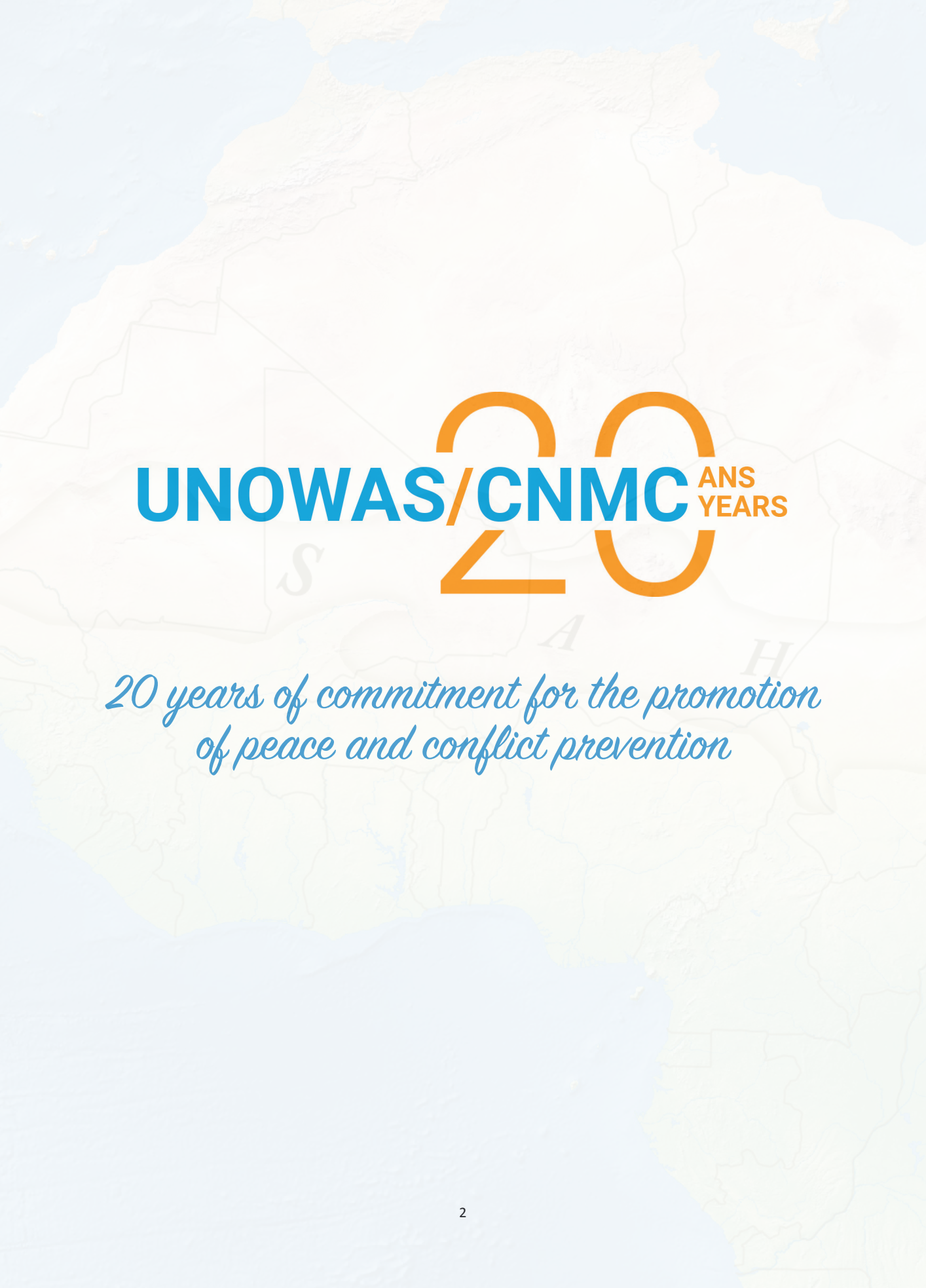
Together for Peace

Quarterly Magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

**Respect for human rights,
fundamental for peace**

The background of the lower half of the cover is a vibrant, abstract painting of a crowd of people. The figures are rendered with bold, expressive brushstrokes in a variety of colors including blue, red, green, and brown. In the center of the crowd, a white rectangular sign is held up, featuring the French text 'Respectons les Droits de l'Homme' in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

Respectons
les
Droits de
l'Homme



UNOWAS/CNMC **20** ANS YEARS

*20 years of commitment for the promotion
of peace and conflict prevention*

In this issue



EDITO : Committed to Reinforcing Peace, Democracy And Good Governance



UNOWAS in brief



Peace and Stability in the Line of Sight



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**Inclusion, key component of the Security
Reforms in The Gambia**



Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)

Committed to Reinforcing Peace, Democracy And Good Governance

The support expressed by the Member States of the Security Council during my presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the activities of UNOWAS on 7 July leads us, on the one hand, to redouble our efforts with our partners to safeguard the achievements of peace, democracy and good governance. On the other hand, we must also intensify our commitment to help the countries of the subregion to stem the harmful consequences of the numerous challenges, that they continue to face.

The global context, marked by the slow recovery of national economies following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the consequences of the war in Ukraine add to the challenges faced by the subregion. The deterioration of the regional security situation, marked by three military transitions in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, as well as an attempted coup in Guinea Bissau, undoubtedly requires increased mobilization of all

partners, national, regional and international.

The continuing efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to resolve the crises in these three countries and work for a rapid return to constitutional order is testimony to the will of its member States. Member states are continually working to ease political tensions and anchor democratic governance as a mode of management of political and public affairs in the countries of the subregion. In this regard, the decision taken by ECOWAS to continue the examination of its 2001 Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, as well as related legal instruments, with a view to strengthening democracy, freedom and good governance in the subregion is an important step that we support.

The elections scheduled for 2023 in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, as well as in Senegal in

2024, are an opportunity to further strengthen democratic governance in these countries and in the sub-region.

My recent visit to Nigeria, a major country in West Africa, gives me cause for optimism. Despite the challenges facing the country, the determination and commitment of all political actors, and those of civil society, to organize free and transparent elections, illustrate the commitment of Nigerians and their institutions to peace and development.

On August 30, in Dakar, UNOWAS and the CNMC, that I have the honour to chair, will mark their 20 years of commitment to peace and conflict prevention in West Africa and the Sahel. Together with our regional and international partners, and more specifically, with the contribution of women and youth, we will continue our commitment to a better future in West Africa and the Sahel.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNOWAS

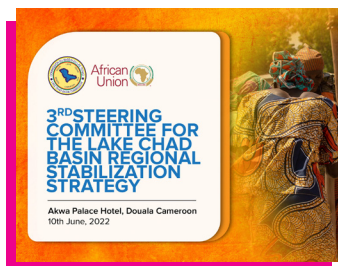
-  UNOWAS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, was established in 2002 as a regional special political mission that reports to the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding (DPPA).
-  Mr. Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF is the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS. Ms. Giovane BIHA is the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General.
-  UNOWAS is mandated by the Security Council to act for the resolution of crises and conflicts through an active role in preventive diplomacy, good offices, and political mediation in the countries of West Africa and the Sahel.
-  UNOWAS covers 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone. Togo and (Chad).
-  UNOWAS works in close collaboration with other United Nations entities and regional and international partners such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union, to promote an integrated approach to the prevention of conflicts and regional challenges.
-  UNOWAS supports the countries of the sub-region in their efforts to consolidate good governance, respect for legality and human rights, and the integration of gender in conflict prevention and management initiatives.
-  UNOWAS supports sub-regional institutions and States to build their capacities to face cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in the sub-region. It also contributes to the analysis and assessment of the impact of climate change on security and stability in the sub-region.
-  UNOWAS participates in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) to support the countries of the Sahel region in their fight against security threats, development challenges and management of the effects of climate change, and the promotion of sustainable development.
-  Mr. Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF is also the President of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CMCN), created to facilitate the implementation of the judgment rendered in 2002 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.
-  The mandate of the (CMCN) includes support for land border demarcation and maritime border delimitation; facilitating the withdrawal from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the transfer of authority to the Republic of Cameroon; responding to the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation.

Counter-Terrorism - Enhancing capacity building and training for West African countries



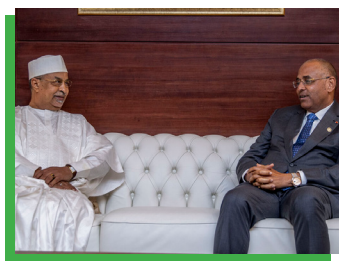
On 23 and 24 June 2022, in Marrakech, the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, participated a high-level meeting of Heads of Counter-Terrorism and Security Agencies, organized by the United Office United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) on enhancing capacity building and training for West African Member States. In his intervention, the SRSG highlighted the security challenges facing the region while underlying the need to strengthen democratic governance and tackle state fragility. He also welcomed the Accra Initiative and called on regional and international partners to help improve the security situation in the sub-region.

Steering Committee on the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience in the Boko Haram affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin



The special Representative Annadif participated in the third meeting of the Steering Committee on the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience in the Boko Haram affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin held in Douala on 10 June. In his address, the special representative mentioned that the regional strategy, which relies on a decentralized, coherent and coordinated approach to addressing the root causes of the crisis in the region, is the most viable mechanism for long-term peace and development of the Lake Chad Basin. The meeting recommended more support and coordination at all levels to accelerate the implementation of the Security Sector Reform. At the end of the meeting, the Regional Action Plan 2022-2024 was adopted.

Fostering national cohesion and dialogue in Cote D'Ivoire



Against the background of the conclusion of the country's political dialogue in March, the Special Representative ANNADIF conducted, from 27 to 28 April, a mission to Côte d'Ivoire. In his discussions with Vice-President Tiémoko Meyliet Koné, Prime Minister Patrick Achi, the Minister of Reconciliation and National Cohesion Kouadio Konan Bertin, and the Médiateur de la République, Adama Toungara, M. ANNADIF welcomed Government's efforts to foster national cohesion and dialogue. He further highlighted Côte d'Ivoire's critical role within ECOWAS, especially in view of the challenges facing the country's three neighbours Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali.

Contributing partners meeting in Dakar



The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), organized, from 14 to 15 June 2022, contributing partners to the Multi-Year Appeal Trust Fund. The meeting aimed to provide DPPA's partners with the opportunity to get insights on DPPA's work, through the lens of UNOWAS, on regional collaboration, conflict prevention, sustaining peace, with specific focus on preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding and support to the electoral processes in the region. Participants included representatives from regional organizations, women's groups, as well as UN Resident Coordinators and UNCT colleagues.

Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum



The second session of the Sahel-Europe Dialogue Forum was held on 15 and 16 July 2022 in Madrid. This forum offered a framework for debate, between different actors, on the stability of the Sahel. Participating virtually in the closing ceremony of the Forum, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, gave his perspective on the challenges and opportunities of the latest strategic changes in the Sahel. He stressed the need for democratic and responsible governance in the fight against insecurity, which also encompasses the establishment of decentralized administrations to provide solutions and services to the populations. Mr. ANNADIF reiterated UNOWAS' commitment to continue "to use all its levers to advocate for cross-cutting and holistic solutions, of which the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is an essential vector. »

Third edition of the Peace and Development Advisors forum



UNOWAS, in partnership with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland, organized the third edition of the Peace and Development Advisors (PDA) forum. 16 PDA's and additional relevant actors from across West Africa, gathered in Dakar from 22 to 24 June 2022 to assess current approaches and strengthen working collaboration. During the two days, participants discussed various themes: peace and security, democratic consolidation, responses to unconstitutional changes of government and political dialogue and social cohesion processes, support to electoral processes, prevention and countering violent extremism, supporting inclusive processes, partnerships with regional organizations and engaging with civil society organizations.

Peace and Stability in the Line of Sight



M. ANNADIF meets the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria

The tour of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, carried out in early May to Senegal, Niger, and Nigeria, was followed by a series of visits undertaken by his Special Representative, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, with the objective of renewing the commitment and support of the United Nations to the countries of the sub-region.

In a continued commitment of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to the countries of the subregion, the Special Representative ANNADIF, increased his travels to several countries, including Nigeria, Guinea, and Ghana, before presenting the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on 7 July, on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel.

In Nigeria, a major country in West Africa, ANNADIF stressed the major role of this country

and recalled the need for all Nigerian actors to remain mobilized so that Nigeria continues to play an important role in peacebuilding, and democracy in the sub-region. He also said that the upcoming elections are a major opportunity to strengthen peace, democracy, development, and good governance in Nigeria, while encouraging the Nigerian authorities, as well as all actors to redouble their efforts to ensure the effective participation of women and youth in the electoral process.

Considering the impact of the challenges that plague the countries of the region, ANNADIF was keen during his various interventions, to renew the call to the international community for more active support, especially in a regional security context that continues to deteriorate, and in an international setting, affected by the war in Ukraine.

In the Ghanaian capital, Accra, Mr. ANNADIF took part on 4 July in the Extraordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State



Lagos, Nigeria - Photo: Muhammadtaha Ibrahim Ma'aji - Unsplash



Elections, a major deadline in many countries in 2023, were also noted in the Special Representative's intervention.

and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on the situation in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. He reiterated the unwavering support of the United Nations to ECOWAS and countries of the subregion in their tireless efforts to consolidate peace and security and build a better future for the people.

The Security Council meeting on 7 July which discussed the situation in West Africa and the Sahel was a great opportunity for the Special Representative to amplify this appeal while presenting, for the third time since taking office, the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of his Office, UNOWAS.

The Report, which covers the period from 22 December 2021 to 22 June 2022, provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel, and an update on UNOWAS activities, as well as progress in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). It also gives an update on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2349 (2017).

During its address to the Security Council, ANNADIF reiterated UNOWAS' support to ECOWAS' efforts to resolve the political crises in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso following the coups, and facilitate the rapid return to constitutional order. It also encouraged ECOWAS to continue its consideration of its 2001 Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, as well as related legal instruments, with a view to strengthening democracy, freedom, and good governance in the subregion.

This call is all the more important as insecurity has increased as a result of non-State armed groups activities, which has led to more displacement both within and outside borders and has undermined expected progress in education and other sectors. Terrorist acts committed in coastal countries of the subregion un-



A classroom in Nigeria - Photo: Doug Linstedt - Unsplash

derscore, according to ANNADIF, the persistence of the threat posed by the spread of terrorism to those countries that have, in response, intensified their collaboration within the framework of the Accra Initiative to combat and prevent terrorist attacks. For their part, Burkina Faso and Niger have revised their counter-terrorism strategies to include actions aiming at local dialogue and reintegration.

Elections, a major deadline in many countries in 2023, were also noted in the Special Rep-



ANNADIF reiterated UNOWAS' support to ECOWAS' efforts to resolve the political crises in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso following the coups, and facilitate the rapid return to constitutional order

representative's intervention. They will undoubtedly be an opportunity to strengthen good governance and democracy, but they can also be a source of tension if they are not organised in an inclusive and peaceful spirit that considers the interests of citizens.

The Special Representative also stressed the need to support countries in the subregion that are facing various challenges, including humanitarian challenges. The situation in those areas has reached an alarming thresh-



Meeting of the UNOWAS delegation and the Resident Coordinator's Office in Abuja

old, worsening further due to gloomy harvest prospects. Violence and insecurity have also prevented access to agricultural land in some areas. More than 40,800 people have fled their country, bringing the total number of refugees in the subregion to nearly 1.1 million as of May. At the same time, as regional economies recovered from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising food and energy prices further exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and inequalities.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), ANNADIF also provided an update on the progress made in finalizing the demarcation process between the two countries. He informed that 327 new pillars have been installed, bringing the implementation rate to 75 per cent. This demarcation work is also accompanied by local activities aimed at building trust between the two border communities. ANNADIF also told the UNSC about the report of the Sub com-

mission on Demarcation, which made recommendations for the resolution of three remaining points of disagreement. He stressed the involvement of the United Nations through resident coordinators and country teams in Cameroon and Nigeria, so that more programme assistance is provided to populations affected by the demarcation process.

UNOWAS, fostering peace and preventing conflicts in West Africa and the Sahel

We work in with our regional partners towards peace and security

We support countries in the promotion and protection of human rights

We contribute to the effective participation of women and youth in peacemaking and conflict prevention efforts

We support the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

We support countries in their efforts to address multiple challenges related to peace

The United Nations office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), a regional special political Mission of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

We facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice ruling on the boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria

« Nigeria could be a leader in the world on many fronts »



Mr. Matthias Schmale
United Nations Resident Coordinator and
Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria

The new United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mathias Schmale, has worked in several complex conflict settings including Palestine and Syria for the UN and previous humanitarian roles with the International Federation of Red Cross in Geneva. After only 8 months in office, he believes that despite the many challenges, “Nigeria could be a leader in the world on many fronts” Interview.

You have been serving as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria since last December? What can you tell us about this country and your role?

After only 8 months in this fascinating and beautiful country, there are many deep and conflicting impressions. On the one hand, there is not only rich history and culture but thriving entrepreneurship and innovation, achievements in improving infrastructure and women playing a leading role, for instance, in the vibrant private sector and in the judiciary.

However, on the one hand, there are the dramatic challenges Nigeria is facing ranging from the devastating impact of the non-international conflict in the Northeast to more than on average two thousand children dying daily of preventable diseases to the staggering almost 100 million people living in poverty. The impact of the conflict on civilians I see in Nigeria is truly heartbreaking. But, with the enormous potential in its people and natural resources, Nigeria could be a leader in the world on many fronts. This leaves me optimistic about what the country can achieve and how the UN can play a vital role in making the realization of

the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a reality.

As both the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, my portfolio is diverse and engaging. As the representative of the UN Secretary-General, I have 10 core functions including strategic analysis and planning; supporting national coordination systems and processes; development and management of shared operational support services within the UN; crisis management and preparedness response; external communications and advocacy; human rights and development, joint resource mobilization and fund management; oversight of the



We cannot talk about the future, and the agenda 2030 without young people at the table. To be successful, any development initiative must include young people. They must have a say in their future.

UN country programming cycle and representation and support of UN secretariat/UN Agencies and non-resident agencies.

My role is to enable the 24 UN agencies working in Nigeria to be more transformative and catalytic in nature to ensure Nigeria “moves the needle” to achieve far greater impact in its development aspirations. This means supporting UN Agencies and Nigerian government counterparts to implement across the four core pillars of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, human rights and peace. In a complex environment like Nigeria, driving sustainable development and humanitarian assistance work often has human rights-based and peacebuilding aspects mainstreamed across it, illustrating the importance of working across what we call the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus.

How the UN is being more transformative in a complex environment like Nigeria?

Nigeria’s context is complex with six geopolitical zones of an estimated at least 215 million people, which makes it the largest population in Africa and 6th largest population in the world. Nigeria has nearly a 50/50% split in terms of urban and non-urban dwellers as well as male to female ratio. It also has roughly 40% of the population under 0-14, illustrating the rising potential and need to support young people in the country. Young people’s voices must be heard on issues that affect them. I am told that a South-West Nigerian proverb says, “You cannot shave someone’s head in his absence.” At a recent meeting with People Living With Disability, they – including young people among them underlined the importance of “nothing about us without us”. This slogan applies to young people as well. We cannot talk about the future, and the agenda 2030 without young people at the table. To be successful, any development initiative must include young people. They must have a say in their future.

Lastly, Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups and over 500 languages and a number of religious identities which explains the richness of its culture and traditions, as well as some of the tensions and conflict at the communal, state and Federal level.

We respond to the humanitarian situation in Northeast Nigeria is responded to through the Humanitarian Response Plan based on the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Continued insecurity limits access of the affected populations to

much needed assistance. Access to services covering basic human needs such as temporary learning spaces, toilets and showers; distribution of hygiene kits to families; construction and rehabilitation of boreholes with batteries of water points is a human right.

The UN continues to advocate with relevant authorities both at the federal and state level to find lasting solutions to the root causes of the displacement. As the Government has acknowledged, Nigeria must make big decisions now with wisdom and courage to achieve its potential.

More broadly, an economic, social and political transformation built on the culture of innovation and digitalization would enable Nigeria to leap into the 21st century. Building on this, a push to go green is the right option for Nigeria, resulting in faster growth and better outcomes across the board, for businesses and communities alike. And strong regional leadership, particularly in trade, the key to Nigeria’s growth, will support sustainable development.

2023 is an election year for Nigeria. What are the major challenges and priorities you foresee ahead of these elections?

There are many challenges facing Nigeria and the rest of Africa. Economies have nose-dived due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going war in Ukraine; Multi-dimensional poverty has increased; Peace and Security is under constant threat; violent extremism is on



the rise, climate change impact is biting, and people's coping capacity is stretched to the limits.

The rise in crude oil prices and OPEC's increase in Nigeria's oil production quota should shore up Nigeria's government revenues and foreign exchange revenue from crude oil sales. Despite the possible windfall gain, Nigeria is likely to experience a net loss of foreign exchange as prices of petroleum products and other commodities such as wheat have increased significantly. Rising import bills, increased subsidy payments for refined petroleum products, and increased debt service payments could potentially draw down government revenues and foreign exchange reserves. We are beginning to see adverse implications for the cost of living and doing business in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria could face

serious macroeconomic challenges, including pressures on the Naira, high inflation, deteriorating fiscal deficit and higher debt in the months ahead.

A further obvious challenge comes from rising temperatures. In 2020, 22 Nigerian cities recorded temperatures over 40°C with a combined average of about 27 days. In the same year, 17 states experienced high 1-day rainfall values of 100mm and above. Other fast onset events such as flash floods, river floods, coastal floods, coastal erosion, ocean surges and swells, windstorms, dust storms occur in various parts of Nigeria. At the same time, desertification continues to pose a threat to the livelihoods of more than 40 million people in 11 northern states constituting about 35% of the country's total land area.

We must all regroup, recommit and build back better towards the 2030 Agenda and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This requires Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability. Sustainable Development is about economic development that is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable – development that balances prosperity with progress for people and protection of the planet. It requires familiarity with economics, social justice – leaving no one behind – human rights and fairness as well as reducing inequalities.

A business-as-usual approach will not work, and we must identify transformative initiatives that will move the needle for instance, towards putting significant numbers of young people into employment, making affor-

dable renewable energy available for all and to renewing the fragile social contract.

As part of the global community, we in the UN and you in Nigeria are still far from the world we want. What seems certain is that no single country can solve the myriads of challenges prevailing across the world. Our best hope lies in international cooperation and multilateralism towards sustainable development. Government, the United Nations, civil society, academia, private sector must mobilise together to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals for people and for the planet.

In relation to the upcoming February 2023 Presidential and March 2023 Gubernatorial elections, we remain optimistic that the electoral process will be free, fair and credible. An Electoral Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) was conducted in April 2022 at the request of the Nigerian Government and the UN is working with government counterparts to support the elections. With many others, we are hoping for constructive debate over these coming months on options to solve the country's big problems. Needless to state, the choices that the people will make in 2023 will determine the quality of leadership and governance for the next four years which are crucial for a step change in meeting the country's development ambitions. It will also determine the kind of leadership that Nigeria will occupy in Africa and the comity of nations. I encourage all eligible Nigerians especially women and the youth to seize opportunities presented by the new Electoral Act assented to

by the President recently to register and effectively participate in the elections. And on behalf of the UN in Nigeria I wish the country peaceful and successful elections devoid of violence and rigging in 2023.

UN has been an active partner in Nigeria. What are the key achievements of the UN in Nigeria?

Our collective UN focus is on providing technical and financial support towards the achievement of Nigeria's Medium Term National Development Plan and making progress on the SDGs at national and sub-national levels.

The UN system supported the government in convening food systems summit dialogues to help promote more sustainable food systems. The Government is currently following up by organizing subnational action planning processes without assistance. This bound to have positive influence on the government's plan to lift 100 million people out of poverty within the next ten years.

Within the framework of the Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan, many UN agencies are working together to try and address the huge problem of youth unemployment. Let me give you some examples. A few months ago, UNDP started the Jubilee Fellows Programme. It is an initiative aimed at enabling 20,000 skilled young people to get jobs within the private or public sector and international development agencies. It is one way of enabling the private sector to tap into this large pool of well-trained Nigerian young people.

Another initiative is by UNIDO and it is called the Nigeria Start-Up Centre. This is a platform for enabling young entrepreneurs to deploy technology to start their own digital enterprises. A similar initiative by ILO working with the International Telecommunication Union aims to enhance the skills of young people to enable them to start businesses in the tech field. We also have a big initiative led by UNICEF called Generation Unlimited which aims to connect more than 20 million youths with opportunities to thrive in the digital economy. In addition, FAO is working with out-of-school youth to integrate them into the agriculture value chain. We will continue to work together to build on these solutions and further increase their impact.

We all know there are cultural problems, discrimination, violence against women and some harmful practices standing in the way of a young girl or woman fulfilling her destiny in life. We have a major project called the Spotlight Initiative funded



We will continue other efforts at peacebuilding for example in the Middle Belt and the continued support of our Counter Terrorism Office at the UN headquarters



mainly by the European Union to work on these challenges around the country. My colleagues in UN Women are also working with the Government, National Assembly and other stakeholders to ensure that the legal and policy frameworks are supportive of gender equality in all aspects of life, including the political areas you have noted. And my colleagues in UNODC are working with the Nigerian Police to ensure more female officers are recruited to contribute to gender equality in the society. Change will inevitably come if we all stay committed to overcoming the obstacles that limit women from realising their potential.

We know that there can be no development without peace, and no peace without development. The national peace committee at federal level and some peace committees at lower le-

vels have been supported by the UN. We also work through political dialogue and the good offices of the UN, for example the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa, in addition to our support to the security agencies of the government. We will continue other efforts at peacebuilding for example in the Middle Belt and the continued support of our Counter Terrorism Office at the UN headquarters.

To help keep children in school, UNICEF is supporting community mobilization and cash transfers to reduce the number of Almajiri children who are out of school. The rehabilitation and building of infrastructure through micro-grants to Center-based Management Committees is also being supported, alongside support for the mainstreaming of Almajiri into formal public

schools, as well as the provision of alternative learning pathways through low-tech options such as community learning hubs. Furthermore, UNFPA with the support of Norway, Canada is supporting over 30,000 girls to enrol and be retained in school and safe spaces.

We are partnering with the Government and other stakeholders on a number of important efforts to combat climate change. These include the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement, strengthening national and sub-national capacities for participatory planning, policy formulation and sustainable natural resources management and strengthening national preparedness capacities to access the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



1
NO
POVERTY



2
ZERO
HUNGER



3
GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4
QUALITY
EDUCATION



5
GENDER
EQUALITY



6
CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



7
AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



8
DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



9
INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10
REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



11
SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



12
RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



13
CLIMATE
ACTION



14
LIFE
BELOW WATER



15
LIFE
ON LAND



16
PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



17
PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



National Human Rights Institutions play a key role in promoting peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel



Opening remarks at the fourth regional consultation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in West Africa, in Abidjan

The fourth regional consultation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in West Africa was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 28 to 30 June 2022. For three days, representatives of NHRIs from fourteen (14) countries explored ways and means to strengthen regional cooperation for the effective implementation of strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights.

As part of its mandate to promote peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) maintains partnerships with NHRIs as well as regional and national actors with the aim of strengthening the culture of respect for

human rights, the rule of law and good governance through a conflict prevention strategy. With the continued support of UNOWAS and other regional partners such as the Commission of the Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the network of National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa organizes the annual regional consultation of NHRIs in West Africa and the Sahel.

This year, the fourth edition, held in the Ivorian capital, Abidjan,

over three days brought together representatives of Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The objective of the meeting was to explore opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation with a view to consolidating the implementation of national and regional strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights in West Africa and the Sahel.



There are restrictions on civic and political space, there are threats to freedom of expression, to press freedom, to freedom of opinion

UN and subregional organizations support NHRIs

For almost 30 years, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have contributed to the effective implementation of human rights within States. NHRIs are independent organizations and were set up in 1993 in Vienna at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights. They are primarily responsible for their implementation in accordance with the Paris Principles relating to the status and functioning of National Institutions for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

In West Africa and the Sahel, NHRIs play a key role in promoting peace and security. The independence and institutional development of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), the strengthening of their role in the prevention, promotion and protection of human rights, as well as the various human rights challenges currently facing the region, are all topics that were discussed during this fourth regional consultation of NHRIs.

The topics that dominated the discussions included: terrorism-related threats, shrinking civic space and impunity, the increased spread of hate speech and human rights violations in the context of preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism, electoral processes and the ongoing political transitions in the ECOWAS region, as well as the promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children and migrants.

During her statement, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Giovane Biha, highlighted the centrality of human rights in promoting peace, security, and sustainable development. She also highlighted the key role of human rights actors, including National Human Rights Institutions.

Representatives of human rights institutions formulated recommendations that should make it possible to address the underlying structural causes of conflicts and, to promote lasting peace and stability in the region. They urged NHRIs to continue to mon-



For almost 30 years, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have contributed to the effective implementation of human rights within States

itor electoral processes and engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that these processes are inclusive, peaceful, transparent, and respectful of human rights and the rule of law.

Enhanced collaboration with the United Nations

Today, three countries in the region, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali, are in a situation of political transition following coups. In an interview with UNOWAS Magazine, Mr. Aguibou BOUARE, President of the National Human Rights Commission of Mali, revealed that in his country, "the coup d'état has had consequences for individual and collective freedoms and the human rights situation has fairly deteriorated." Mr. BOUARE stressed that the current context "is a fertile ground for human rights violations". "There are restrictions on civic and political space, there are threats to freedom of expression, to press freedom, to freedom of opinion," he said. "We are trying to play our part. Until proven otherwise, we are respected by the authorities



A transit center for migrants deported from Algeria to their country, Agadez, Niger - PHOTO: UNICEF

because we do not receive formal instructions and no direct threats.”

On this issue of political transitions, NHRIs representatives stressed the importance of continued engagement with transitional authorities to advocate for respect for human rights and an accelerated return to constitutional order and the rule of law.

More public resources and stronger relations with national authorities and civil society organizations are needed. It must be recognized that many NHRIs continue to face various challenges regarding their functioning and efficiency. That is why the United Nations, including UNOWAS, continues to support the implementation of NHRI initiatives for the promotion and protection of

human rights for peace, security, and sustainable development in West Africa.

This commitment is well appreciated by NHRIs who have called for the strengthening of collaboration with regional organizations and the United Nations around emerging human rights issues in West Africa.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in Action

Activities

Achievements

Facilitating the withdrawal of troops and transfer of authority in Lake Chad area, along the land boundary and in the Bakassi Peninsula

The CNMC facilitated the peaceful transfer of authority over Bakassi to Cameroon through the Greentree Agreement, in accordance with the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

Demarcation of the land boundary and delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two countries

2,050 kilometers of demarcation have been surveyed and approved by Cameroon and Nigeria out of a total of approximately 2,100 kilometers

Delineation of the maritime boundary in accordance with the Judgement of the International Court of Justice

Out of a total of 2696 pillars to be built, 1673 pillars have already been built and placed

Addressing the situation of local populations in boundary areas affected by the demarcation activities

The CNMC, in liaison with partners, has developed confidence building programs to mitigate the impacts caused by the demarcation.

Making recommendations on confidence-building measures aiming at promoting peaceful cross-border cooperation

The Mixed Commission also approved the recommendations for crossborder cooperation on hydrocarbon deposits straddling the maritime boundary

“The Independence of The National Human Rights Institutions Is Vital To Curb Emerging Human Rights issues”



Joseph Whittal

President of the Network of NHRIs in West Africa

Joseph Whittal is the President of the Network of NHRIs in West Africa. He is also the Ghana Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). He tells us more about the fourth consultation of National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa and its outcomes. Interview.

Mr. Whittal, we are here in Abidjan for a three-day consultation of NHRIs. What is the purpose of this meeting?

Every year the Network of NHRIs in West Africa holds what we call annual consultations which are around themes of human rights promotion and protection, which the network deems crucial, either by virtue of the issues being played out locally in the

countries in West Africa, or because of their international importance.

This year, we chose to center our discussions around themes of the independence and institutional functionality of national human rights institutions. These institutions need to be independent, to be able to be a counter check of the executive, legislature, and other bodies that either

impinge on human rights or advance human rights. That is crucial!

We discussed the shrinking civic space, as a result of frequent attacks on media, and how people cannot report and all manner of this affects reporting on issues such as xenophobia and discrimination against women, vulnerable groups, and people with disabilities, among others. We made

sure that we discuss them, because they are relevant to our institution. Furthermore, West Africa is convulsed by a number of coups d'état and subsequent political transitions which bring negative consequences for the population. Even in terms of changes of democratic governments human rights can be negatively impacted. This was thoroughly discussed.

Another matter we discussed was the Global Compact on migration. Migration is a big issue in West Africa because it's our youth who go in search of greener pastures. If the youth are given the opportunity for employment, if poverty is tackled this youth will not find themselves traveling and putting their lives at risk through the Sahara Desert, Morocco and other places, to access Europe.

We then drew attention to the role that national human rights institutions can play in supporting youth migration issues. We must ensure that the state authorities responsible for ensuring that migration issues are handled, see it from a human rights perspective.

Can you tell us more about the Regional Network of National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa? what are the main achievements of the network?

I would say, quite a number. There was a time in this network, when there

were only four status A institutions: Ghana, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, and I think Togo. But now, we have several national human rights institutions, which were Category B, becoming category A, because we have worked on their legal framework. We've been able to work with state authorities to improve upon their framework to allow them to have the status A. When you are status A, it means you have recognition, standing at the Africa commission level, and at the UN fora, like the Universal Periodic Review.

We have also tried to mobilize resources, cooperation and develop partner support for some of the NHRIs. They don't always have the capacity to do the works you need to train them. By letting them really embrace the ethos of human rights, they will be able to improve their work as professionals. That is what we've been doing for them.

What are the main recommendations of this consultation of National Human Rights Institutions?

It is very clear that the independence of the National Human Rights Institutions is vital. Therefore, state authorities should ensure that they improve their budgetary allocations to national human rights institutions. If we don't improve their budgetary allocations, they can't do what they're expected to do. We're talking about emergent human rights issues. We have ter-

rorism in our subcontinent. We have violent extremism. We have so many emerging human rights issues that require the supporting resources of the NHRIs to play a meaningful role.

The other main recommendation that came out was that we should look at the Global Compact on migration. The role of the NHRIs and preparing ourselves to see what we can do to assist state authorities appreciate the human rights aspect of migration, because we are a subcontinent whose youth migrate out more.

Any perspective for the future?

For me, on a personal level, this is my third year as president of the network. I wish that the next time I'm handing over, I will be handing over a network that has got very strengthened national human rights institutions. Specifically, I hope we will have 15 status A institutions. By working closely with ECOWAS, we'll be able to get the two NHRIs that are having difficulties and challenges and running. We have in mind Cabo Verde that has issues. We want to see how the network can insert ourselves as a goodwill mission with a parliament of Cabo Verde. We also want to see what we can do with Guinea because of the dissolution of the NHRI there. We hope to achieve this during my term.

STAND UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

#STANDUP4HUMANRIGHTS

“Human rights are central to our efforts to enhance peace and stability in the region”



Williams Lifongo

Senior human rights adviser

UNOWAS

Following the fourth regional consultation of national human rights Institutions in West Africa, Mr. Williams Lifongo, Senior human rights adviser of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), interacted with us on the status of Human Rights in the region and the role of UNOWAS in the promotion of the respect for human rights.

What is the role of UNOWAS regarding the protection of Human rights?

Working with national and regional actors on the protection of human rights and the enhancement of the rule of law is a critical part of UNOWAS's mandate. Through different strategic approaches, we engage at both regional and national level, with a specific focus on strengthening and supporting regional networks. This is done through the good office of the Special Representative (SRSG) which has been at the forefront of advocating for the respect of human right and rule of law in the region. This work is supported by UNOWAS which actively works and advocates for peace and security in the region. Additionally, at

the regional level we work very closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) commission, to support its initiatives that relate to the respect for human rights.

In collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the ECOWAS Commission, we support the regional network for national human rights institutions. We also support the regional network of human rights defenders, which is a group of human rights civil society organizations and are in the process of establishing an original network for policymakers, which we call a forum for ministers of justice in the region. We hope this will be effective in sustaining the political will that is

required to address the challenge of impunity, and to enhance judicial governance in the region.

We also work closely at the national level, with the United Nations country team and with specific human rights actors, to be able to identify specific challenges and see to what extent, UNOWAS can address them.

UNOWAS has supported the organization of the regional consultation of national human rights Institutions. What can you tell us about that? What are the main recommendations of that meeting?

The regional consultation, which is led by the regional network, is one of our

strategic approaches to enhance the respect of human rights in the region. We, UNOWAS, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the ECOWAS Commission, often help in the organization of these meetings. The idea is to create a platform for national human rights institutions to exchange views, to exchange best practices and lessons learned, and also to network in a way that would constructively enhance the ability and capacity to implement their respective mandates.

The last, or most recent consultation was in Abidjan, where we brought together the national human rights institutions to, discuss the situation in the region, examine the way they have been implementing their mandate and to make concrete suggestions as to how this can be improved. It was two days of intense discussions, with very concrete recommendations aimed at, improving the independence and role of the National Human Rights Institutions, within the context of fighting against violent extremism. We had recommendations, touching on the role of national human rights institutions in electoral processes, specifically addressing the issue of

hate speech. We had discussions on improving the collaboration between national human rights institutions and other state institutions, particularly those working on development, and humanitarian issues. We also had interesting discussions on how the national human rights institutions could enhance their partnerships at the national level with civil society organizations and with victims' groups.^t Then, at the regional level, with other related institutions within ECOWAS, and with the UN, more generally, we discussed how to bring this coalition of human rights actors together to assist them in implementing their mandate.

What is your message to our partners and interlocutors?

Human rights are central to our efforts to enhance peace and stability in the region. Whenever there are violations of or abuses of human rights, there is a propensity for violence and for conflict. It's a clarion call to everyone to ensure that, irrespective of where we are, or what we are doing, we must be mindful of a human rights-based approach to ensure that we promote the respect of human rights while mainstreaming and integrating human

rights in our work. It has been proven over time, that an approach to peace and security that integrates human rights is more sustainable, is more effective, and is more result oriented, both at national regional level.



Travailler avec les acteurs nationaux et régionaux sur la protection des droits de l'homme et le renforcement de l'état de droit est un élément essentiel du mandat de l'UNOWAS



The Freetown Female Correctional Centre in Sierra Leone. Photo: Tom Bradley/ AdvocAid

Inclusion, key component of the Security Reforms in The Gambia

In an effort to evaluate the impact of Security Sector Reforms (SSR), a Technical Assessment Mission (TAM) was conducted by a joint UN-ECOWAS-AU team in The Gambia from 12-15 July 2022. The mission was aimed at ascertaining the government's capacity to advance the SSR agenda and to identify any additional support needed to accomplish this aim.



Participants at the Gender/SSR Workshop in The Gambia

The Defense and Security Sector has become characterizable by its lack of diversity. Women are severely underrepresented, making up only 9% of The Gambian Armed Forces (GAF). Gender bias has permeated the system, culminating in a belief that women's competencies and skills are inadequate for the sector. To combat this and other bias, reforms were implemented to facilitate increased inclusion.

In order to discuss the implementation of these reforms, five workshops were organized over five days, bringing together around, fifty participants from various corporations such as the Police, Army, a range of Security Committees, civil society organizations and external oversight actors. These groups have impact. Therefore, by enhancing visibility and advocating for diverse representation among such groups, contribu-

tions are made to the security and strength of the country.

Collective action

Since 2017, UNDP has supported the Gambian government to advance SSR in The Gambia with Peacebuilding Funds. This financial support has contributed to the development of the National Security Policy, the National Security Strategy and the National Strategy for




Women are severely underrepresented, making up only 9% of The Gambian Armed Forces (GAF)

SSR. The collective action of UNOWAS, UNDP, AU, ECOWAS and the Gambian government, ensures appropriate measures can be best delivered by key actors. In doing so, regional stability is promoted and maintained.

Furthermore, workshops on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Security Sector in West Africa and the Sahel, focused on the importance of applying a gender lens to security. This ensures that gender mainstreaming becomes the new norm. In order to tackle the many challenges facing West Africa and the Sahel sub-region,

coordination, informed knowledge and information sharing must be utilized and enhanced. As such, during the Validation Workshop on the Draft Legal Coordination Framework for SSR in The Gambia, the importance of coordination between national and international actors was emphasized.

Speaking on the final day of the TAM, the President of the Republic of The Gambia, HE Adama Barrow, reiterated the government's full commitment to advancing security sector reform in The Gambia, stating that the "political will is at 100%".



UNOWAS/CNMC 20 **ANS**
YEARS



*20 ans d'engagement pour la promotion
de la paix et la prévention des conflits*

*20 years of commitment for the
promotion of peace and conflict
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