



UNOWAS Magazine

Together for Peace

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

UNOWAS/CNMC : 20 years of commitment for the promotion of peace and conflict prevention





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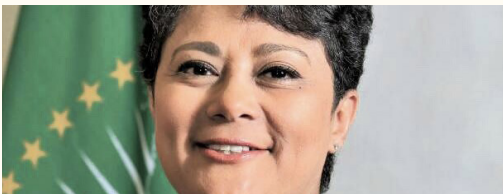
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UNOWAS and CNMC celebrate their 20 years anniversary

On the 30th of August, UNOWAS and CNMC celebrated 20 years of engagement in the prevention of conflict and the consolidation of peace in West Africa and the Sahel. This monumental occasion was used as an opportunity to revisit the critical work of UNOWAS and CNMC and showcase the major achievements that have been accomplished in the past 20 years. In attendance were former SRSGs Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Said Djinnit (remotely), Mohamed Ibn Chambas; SRSG Wane of MINUSMA, Senegalese Foreign Minister Aissata Tall Sall, Nigeria's Attorney General and Minister of Justice Abubakar Malami, Cameroon's Ambassador to Senegal Jean Ntonga, ECOWAS Commission President Oumar Alieu Touray and the African Union High Representative for the Sahel, Maman Sidikou and Ibrahim Fall. Also in attendance were members of the

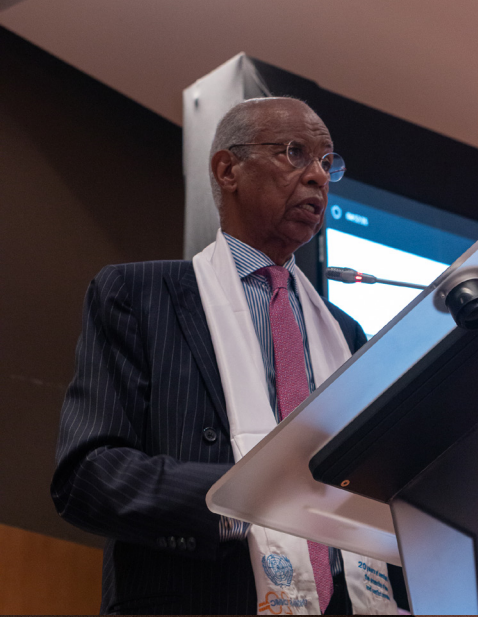
diplomatic community and UN Regional Directors and RCs of the region.

SRSG ANNADIF, in his role as Head of UNOWAS and Chairman of CNMC, welcomed the guests and reaffirmed a commitment to peace and democratic consolidation in West Africa and the Sahel. Previous SRSGs touched on their own personal testimonies of their time in office and acknowledged the evolving nature of the political and security context in the region. All speakers expressed concerns on issues such as violent extremism, democratic backsliding and increased geopolitical competition among foreign powers in the region. The ECOWAS Commission President and the AU representative also underscored how partnerships between the UN and regional organizations have been crucial in addressing these challenges and

informing how they should be pursued in the future.

Further, as a model for the peaceful resolution of border disputes, the commendable achievements of CNMC were recognized and celebrated. The head of the Nigerian delegation to the CNMC, and Ambassador of Cameroon to Senegal as representative of the head of the Cameroonian delegation to the CNMC, both congratulated the UN for its role in the peaceful resolution of the border dispute between their two countries. Particular attention was paid to the physical demarcation of 2050 km out of their 2100km common border and commitment was pledged by all parties to complete the demarcation process.

Together for peace - Happy 20th Anniversary UNOWAS/CNMC!

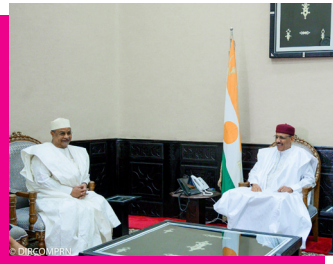


Technical mission to Ghana



From 12 to 17 September UNOWAS undertook a technical mission to Ghana to consult with relevant stakeholders on the political, security and socio-economic situation in the country and implications for the region. The delegation met with key national interlocutors, ranging from Government authorities, representatives of the Electoral Commission, the two main political parties (New Patriotic Party) and the National Democratic Congress), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and UN entities.

SRSB ANNADIF visit to Niger



SRSB Annadif conducted from 8 to 9 September a two-day working visit to Niamey, to engage with President Bazoum and former President Issoufou on the Joint Strategic Assessment on Security, Governance and Development in the Sahel (JSA). As part of the visit, he also discussed the political situation in Niger and in the region with President Bazoum. On the JSA, SRSB Annadif thanked President Issoufou for his commitment to the process as a tool to address challenges in the region.

Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohamed, visits West Africa



From 8-12 August, SRSB Annadif accompanied Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed in her informal consultations with leaders in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region. SRSB Annadif and DSG Amina Mohamed engaged with Heads of States in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Nigeria and Togo, as well as the newly-installed ECOWAS Commission. The focus of the discussions was the crisis in the Sahel, as well as how to strengthen the collaboration between the UN and the governments of the region to better address security and development challenges.

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

“Senegal must remain a model of stability and a driving force for the region”



Since October 2020, Siaka Coulibaly has been serving as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Senegal. With over 30 years' experience in international cooperation and development, he sees Senegal as “A model of stability and a driving force for the region”. Interview

You are the RC in Senegal since 2020, what can you tell us about this country?

Senegal is a fascinating country in many ways. It is rich; rich in the diversity of its cultures and populations, rich in the beauty of its landscapes, but above all rich in the peace, security and stability that the country has preserved since its independence, and which makes it a model of stable democracy in the sub-region.

A few years ago, I had the chance to serve in Senegal first as Team Leader and Country Advisor at the UNDP Regional Service Centre in Dakar, and then, in 2020, I returned as Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System. One of the things that struck me was the dynamism of the youth, which in my view represents one of the great riches of the country. Notwithstanding the challenges they face, young people show a resilience and inventiveness that impresses me

and gives me faith in a prosperous and sustainable future for the economic and social development of the country. This is why the United Nations System has not hesitated to support the various initiatives initiated by the Government in favor of youth, by developing a United Nations Youth Strategy in Senegal, which is backed by the Senegal Emerging Youth Plan (SEP Youth) and the 2030 Agenda.

Alongside young people, women also show exemplary dynamism



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mism, as forces within Senegal's economic fabric. This should be welcomed and encouraged. As with young people, we work a lot with women. Recently we had the privilege to see, during the joint field mission of the United Nations System (UNS) in the north of the country, the tremendous results obtained by the women rice producers of Ross Béthio, or the rice fields of Woudourou (cooperation between refugee and native women) thanks to the support of our Agencies' joint projects.

As Resident Coordinator, and in accordance with the direction of reform of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) with the central principle of Leave No One Behind, in my view it is very important that women, young people as well as all vulnerable people, are at the heart of all development initiatives carried out by the United Nations System in Senegal. This is in support of the Government's efforts to design and implement projects and programs that are in line with national development priorities.

Finally, the prevailing feeling of the Resident Coordinator in Senegal is one of enthusiasm; to serve in a country with immense possibilities, with a dynamic youth, full of potential and a promising future.

Senegal is a major country in West Africa and beyond. What are the main challenges facing the country?

Like all countries, Senegal suffers the consequences of multifaceted crises at both global and regional levels. The challenge to which the country should, in my opinion, pay particular attention to, is the preservation of peace and stability in order to better consolidate and strengthen Senegal's status as a stable country in the sub-region and in Africa. Indeed, in a context of increasing institutional, political and security crises in the Sahel and West Africa, Senegal must remain a model of stability and a driving force for the region in its quest for economic and social development. The country's democratic achievements, its peace and stability, must be preserved at all costs.

Of course, the United Nations Country Team, which I have the honor of leading, is working closely with the Government of Senegal on issues of governance, peace and security, but also on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as promoting access to basic social services and social protection. These constitute the three axes of our Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development 2019-2023 with the Senegalese Government.

We are currently preparing, in collaboration with the government and national partners, our new Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development 2024-2028, which we want to be as inclusive and sustainable as possible, taking into account the sub-regional and regional dimension. It is for these reasons that we have initiated a series of consultations with women's associations, young people, people living with disabilities, the private sector, civil society and other national partners. The aim is that the new Cooperation Framework will improve Senegal's response to current and future challenges by focusing on methods that highlight resilience and recovery.

In addition to governance, peace and security, there are other pressing challenges, notably employment, especially for young people, education and health, food and energy self-sufficiency. Despite the impact of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, I must say that the Government of Senegal has achieved notable results on these issues, which should be commended. We continue to work closely with national partners to address all these challenges and maintain the positive momentum that the country has garnered.

Climate change and its impact remains an issue to be addressed despite the significant efforts made by the government in the area of environment and climate change mitigation. The United Nations system, through its new cooperation framework currently being formulated, aims to stren-



Mr. Siaka Coulibaly during a field visit to a rice field in Woudourou, northern Senegal.

gthen its intervention in this area to support the government in strengthening the resilience of populations to climate shocks.

The UN is an active partner in Senegal. What are the achievements of the UN in Senegal?

The United Nations and Senegal have long-standing and privileged relations, marked by the seal of excellence, since the country joined the UN on 28 September 1960, five months after its independence. The United Nations system in Senegal has 34 agencies, funds and programs, with a staff of nearly 2,000 people, operational throughout the country and dedicated to supporting the population on a daily basis, particularly the most vulnerable.

Through regular joint missions to the different regions of Senegal, the UN Country Team strives to deploy its action at the local level, creating synergy with the local authorities, local communities, organizations, and above all the populations, for greater effectiveness in interventions and a lasting and resilient positive impact on the lives of communities.

The United Nations agencies in Senegal are fully committed to strengthening social protection, creating economic opportunities, providing access to integrated health, nutrition, water, hygiene and sanitation services, as well as employment, education, migration and resilience to the effects of climate change.

We do this through a variety of projects, programs and initiatives designed to help Senegal achieve its development objectives through the implementation of the national priorities set out in the Emerging Senegal Plan.

It is in this sense that throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the joint contribution of the United Nations Agencies in Senegal, through technical support, epidemiological surveillance, upgrading of reception facilities, community involvement, communication and advocacy on barrier measures and vaccination, but also logistical support and care for the most vulnerable, has been decisive in strengthening the Health System.

I must point out that the United Nations System Agencies (UNS) has put in place a Socio-Economic Response Plan in support of the National Response Plan, the implementation of which has contributed to the achievement of the main development priorities and the resilience strengthening of the most deprived populations.

In fact, by using the technical expertise and financial resources of all the agencies in a coordinated manner, the United Nations country team, under my leadership, has carried out diagnostic assessments on the impact of the pandemic in Senegal and has implemented targeted and appropriate interventions that have produced concrete and positive results for the most vulnerable segments of the population.

To ensure continuity of education during the pandemic, we launched a distance learning platform called 'e-jang' in collaboration with the government, which benefited approximately 655,000 students by distributing laptops, tablets and USB sticks to vulnerable students and by training 200 teachers.

Our support helped facilitate the delivery and dissemination of vaccines throughout the country. This was coupled with awareness campaigns, particularly to the most vulnerable populations, while we also supported the establishment of a vaccine production facility. Established to build the resilience of vulnerable micro and small enterprises against the pandemic, a joint UN Country Team project called «COVID-19 Platform» was

launched in 2020 in five municipalities and expanded last year due to its success.

A total of 1,224 people (including 1,027 women and 180 people living with disabilities) benefited from grants totaling 60 million CFAF under this project. Also, household autonomy, the situation of children, the resilience of the education system, the continuity of learning, employment and the socio-economic integration of young people, respect for women's rights and their empowerment are all priorities for which the United Nations agencies in Senegal have made significant contributions in support of the country.

Following the various crises (COVID-19, war in Ukraine...) the country team supports Senegal in its march towards food security. More than 600 farmers' organizations have been supported, representing nearly 300,000 beneficiaries in the country's 14 regions, with an annual budget of more than 25 million dollars. Similarly, the food basket initiative has helped 14,075 food-insecure households in 8 regions of the country, while preserving the income of local small-scale farmers.

The school canteen program enables 235,000 pupils in 1,261 public primary schools located mostly in rural areas in 11 regions of Senegal to benefit from at least one nutritious hot meal per day.

In addition, the country team is supporting an ambitious ongoing government project that aims to transform and strengthen the agri-food system by supporting

the creation of integrated and competitive agri-food processing centers in the South, Centre, East, West and North of the country. These centers will strengthen agricultural value chains and reduce import dependency through sustainable and inclusive industrialization. This in turn will stimulate employment and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our Agencies are also involved in the development of a national strategy for the digital economy, namely the «Senegal Digital 2025» strategy, which is an important lever for wealth and job creation.

At the level of development planning and financing the United Nations country team, under my leadership, has supported the government in adopting the Integrated National Framework for Financing the SDGs (INFF).



“We are currently preparing, in collaboration with the government and national partners, our new Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development 2024-2028, which we want to be as inclusive and sustainable as possible.”



Dakar, Senegal Photo by Bamby Diagne - Unsplash

The process of this framework included the private sector, civil society and development partners, notably the European Union, and resulted in the elaboration of a development financing assessment and the ongoing finalization of the financing strategy that will help accelerate progress towards the 2030 agenda and development priorities in Senegal.

And what are the UN's priorities for strengthening development in Senegal?

We are approaching the end of the cycle of our Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development 2019-2023, which takes into account Senegal's development priorities, by being backed by the Emerging Senegal Plan (ESP 2035), itself aligned with the United Nations Agen-

da 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063. It is in this collaborative and inclusive spirit that we have begun consultations for the preparation of the new 2024-2028 Cooperation Framework, with all partners, under national ownership.

Taking into account the needs of vulnerable populations will be at the center of the next cooperation framework, particularly

governance, security and peace. However challenges remain, such as ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as well as access to basic social services and social protection. On these we will continue to work in collaboration with the government and all partners. Indeed, we are going to work on crucial issues, taking greater account of vulnerabilities, particularly among women, young people, children, people with disabilities, rural populations, etc., with a view to strengthening their resilience in the face of various external shocks.

For Senegal, I believe it is important to strengthen efforts, in particular on the fight against

poverty and social inequalities, the empowerment of women, the creation of sustainable jobs for young people, the pursuit of the political leadership asserted on the 2030 Agenda, a strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the annihilation of the negative effects of the COVID-19 and of the shocks and crises on the implementation of the SDGs and acceleration of the implementation of the SDGs and priority targets. Here in particular, this is done through the localization of the SDGs via their effective integration in local development plans. Attention should also be paid to the environment and the impact of climate change in the implementation of public policies.

We remain entirely optimistic and convinced that the efforts of the government and its partners for sustainable development and inclusive growth will be fruitful.

With eight years to go before the 2030 Agenda, it is crucial to continue to support the Emerging Senegal Plan (ESP), its Priority Action Plan and its key programs to ensure that the government's priorities, including the SDGs, are on track and will be achieved to advance the country's economic and social development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



CNMC determined to finalize the demarcation process



SRSG ANNADIF with the Heads of Delegation of Cameroon and Nigeria during the 34th CNMC in Abuja.

Since its establishment in 2002, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) has consistently demonstrated over 20 years of stringent commitment to peacebuilding. From 25 to 26 August, the 34th session acknowledged in Abuja, Nigeria, the notable progress CNMC has made, while highlighting the remaining areas of dispute and proposing means to address such disputes.

The meeting was chaired by the Chairperson Mahamat Saleh Annadif while the Minister Michel Zoah, and the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, led the delegations of Cameroon and Nigeria, respectively. During the two-day session, Malami revealed that the two countries had reduced the major disagreement areas from thirteen to three.

The conclusion of this major pillar construction exercise (lots six

A, B and C on the Atlantic Mountain) is a significant achievement particularly, due to the difficulty in accessing the area. Yet, it is important to note that there are still limited areas of border dispute on fringe territory between Nigeria and Cameroon.

A promptly released communiqué stated, the involved parties did not have the same understanding of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) on the areas of Rhoumski, Pillar 8 and Koja. In response to this, the Special Rep-

resentative of the Secretary General (SRSG) ANNADIF stated, "We must redouble our efforts to follow through on our commitments and finalize the process".

It was also during the 34th session that CNMC recommended that the two parties finalized the agreement on the joint exploitation of the hydrocarbon along the maritime border. The efforts of the chairman, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF were spotlighted by Nigeria's Attorney-General in light of the increased frequen-



cy of CNMC meetings. It was due to this diligence that such intricate issues were able to progress at such an impressive rate. In addition to this, Nigeria reaffirmed their financial commitment to CNMC in order to meet their obligations under the mandate while the donations on behalf of Cameroon were also acknowledged. The Commission expressed its gratitude to the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and both governments Cameroon and Nigeria for their contributions towards the demarcation process. SRSg ANNADIF followed this by acknowledging the crucial role of the international community and called on the latter to continue to support such projects. The 35th session on CNMC

will be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon with the exact date still to be confirmed.

In the wake of this session, CNMC were saddened by the news of the death of Former Vice Prime Minister of Cameroon, Amadou Ali. As the head of the Cameroonian delegation, Amadou Ali was a major player in the negotiations of the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. In a communique issued following the announcement of the sad news, the Chairman of the CNMC, M. ANNADIF extended his sincere condolences to the family of the deceased, the Government, and the people of Cameroon.



**We must redouble
our efforts to follow
through on our
commitments
and finalize
the process**

Peaceful elections in Nigeria should serve as an example for the entire region

On 6 October 2022, former SRSG ANNADIF, concluded a two-day working visit to the Nigerian capital, Abuja. The visit was part of the UN's ongoing efforts to support and promote the organization of peaceful general elections, scheduled for 2023.



The upcoming 2023 elections are considered the most competitive in Nigeria's history. This is because it is not just the candidates of the two main parties that are in contention for the coveted position; the race has diversified. This electoral transformation reflects the real sense of a desire for change among the Nigerian people. Voters are engaged rather than apathetic – a problem that has permeated Nigerian elections in the past, particularly among young people.

Despite this, these elections come at a time of extreme turbulence in Nigeria, and the wider sub-region. There remains a significant amount of hate speech and false news circulating that serves to hinder voter participation. Ethnic, religious, and regional issues are rife which could potentially complicate the polls and the post-election period. The multifaceted insecurity- terrorism in the north-east, banditry in the north-west, secessionist agitation in the south-east, the



The upcoming 2023 elections are considered the most competitive in Nigeria's history.

conflict between farmers and herders in the north-central region- may have a negative



impact on the electoral process. This is notwithstanding the economic crisis which is becoming increasingly difficult. The cost of living continues to rise and the inflation rate, estimated at 20.5% in August, is the highest since 2005 according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Furthermore, as reported by Nigeria's Ministry of Budget and National Planning, crude oil exports make up more than 70% of Nigeria's budgetary revenues, but levels have fallen with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) revealing that the country has dropped from first to fourth place among African oil exporters.

Yet, as a result of the national government's efforts and determination for peaceful and credible elections, political actors

remain mobilized and engaged in the process. For instance, in order to promote a violence-free election campaign, the National Peace Committee, led by its chairman, retired General and former Head of State Abdusalami Abubakar, organized a signing ceremony of an agreement between all presidential candidates on 29 September in Abuja. This was the first of two such agreements which obligate candidates to accept any election result, exemplifying the common aim of peace and stability in Nigeria that is underpinning these election efforts.

In 2023, women and young people have the potential to upset the status quo as, highlighted by Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof Mahmood Yakubu,

they are the two demographics with the highest voting population in the country. The INEC has also found that Nigerian youths are leading the number of fresh registrants in voters' registration. Therefore, these elections are crucial for Nigeria, to consolidate the momentum for change into representative political leadership for all.



In 2023, women and young people have the potential to upset the status quo.

Strengthening democracy and good governance in West Africa : “We all have a role to play”



An impressionist painting of Democracy and and Good Governance in West Africa by DALL-E

The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Open Society Initiative – West Africa (OSIWA), the Kofi Annan Foundation (KAF), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized a regional symposium in Dakar on 6 and 7 September on strengthening democracy and good governance in West Africa.

Sixty participants, including experts and practitioners in governance and peacebuilding, representatives of think tanks and research organizations took

part in this symposium. The objective was to provide a platform for an in-depth analysis of the legal regime and decision-making procedures, and to make recom-

mendations that could contribute to a revision of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

Resurgence of unconstitutional changes

Today, West Africa is experiencing a resurgence of coups. In less than two years there has been three unconstitutional changes of governments in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. This political turbulence is very worrying, especially as the stability of West Africa after the scourge of civil wars of the 90s was built on principles and protocols shared around democratic governance and their implementation.

As a reminder, between 1960 and 1980, West Africa recorded a total of 49 coups that caused civil wars in some countries. A certain lull followed from the end of the 1990s, with historic waves of democratization, making the subregion an example of consolidation of democratic gains.

ECOWAS and the Organization of the African Union had, at that time, initiated Protocols to curb this trend of democratic backsliding. The latest ECOWAS document is the Supplementary Protocol on Governance adopted in December 2001. This Protocol, from its first article, stipulates the prohibition of any unconstitutional change.

For two days, the symposium participants reviewed the state of governance and the implementation of the main existing frameworks and normative instruments supporting democratic governance in the sub-region. The main frameworks and instruments analysed were the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the 2007 African

Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the 2011 Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa.

A role to play

Mr. Kabiné Komara, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea, Mr. Mahamat Saleh AN-NADIF, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, as well as Ms. Giovannie Biha, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel were all present at the colloquium. Together they recognized the need to fully understand all governance dynamics in the subregion and in Africa in general in order to achieve tangible and sustainable results.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Komara said that “it is not laws, a protocol or even a constitution that can solve all the challenges related to governance in Africa.” He stated that everyone had a role to play and noted the importance of respect for the texts that make up the laws and protocols. “This calls for a very high sense of responsibility from governments and decision-makers, but also for a very constructive and active citizen engagement from the African people,” he said.

In the same vein, participants called for the mobilization of civil society to influence political decisions on the basis of the expressed will of the majority of citizens of the subregion countries in favour of effective democratic regimes. They also advised to find appropriate formulations and identify resource persons,

including former Heads of State, who can advocate with reluctant Heads of State with a view to achieving a consensual revision of the ECOWAS Additional Protocol.

Recommendations

In addition to major issues related to governance and democracy in West Africa, the colloquium also addressed security challenges in the sub-region.

For the effective organization of elections, the colloquium recommended the establishment of efficient civil registers that would make it possible to extract electoral lists instead of cyclical electoral files. They also called for greater professionalization of election management bodies, starting with the selection criteria of their members, the transparency of their actions and the mechanisms likely to increase their independence.

With regard to political parties, the symposium recommended the creation of spaces for permanent dialogue among stakeholders in electoral processes, including political parties, civil society organizations and the



It is not laws, a protocol or even a constitution that can solve all the challenges related to governance in Africa.



Panel at the regional symposium on strengthening democracy and good governance in West Africa

media. This will enable information sharing and dispute resolution, as well as taking the necessary steps to improve internal democracy and governance within political parties and work for civic and political education of their activists, including lead-

ership and power management training.

Welcoming the partnership that made this this regional symposium possible, the organizers expressed the hope that joint initiatives would make a signifi-

cant contribution to the efforts of the peoples, countries and institutions of the subregion to strengthen democracy, promote peace and stability and accelerate the march towards sustainable development.



UNOWAS/CNMC **20** ANS YEARS

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

Improved maritime security instruments is a necessity



Presentation during the workshop on maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

On 15 September 2022, UNOWAS held a workshop on the issue of Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The theme of the workshop was “Strengthening the adjudicative and enforcement jurisdiction of states in the fight against maritime crimes in the GoG through adherence to relevant International Maritime Organization (IMO) and African Union (AU) instruments”.

According to the International Maritime Bureau’s Piracy Reporting Centre, the GoG alone accounted for 81 incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea out of the 195 incidents recorded globally in 2020. Further, all the three hijacking incidents occurring that year took place in the GoG, and the region accounted for nine out of the 11 incidents involving the use of firearms globally. The GoG also accounted for 95 per cent of crew members kidnapped in 2020 globally. In addition to this, there are emerging concerns about the ways in which the spread of violent extremism towards coastal states could impact maritime security. As such, it is evident that the international legal frameworks as they cur-

rently stand, are inadequate measures for addressing critical issues such as these.

To address such challenges, the workshop brought together experts, academics, and government representatives from various countries of the sub-region as well as from the UN system. The objective was to raise awareness among ECOWAS members about the importance of ratifying the relevant maritime security instruments, and their incorporation into the national legislation to empower judicial authority in the fight against maritime insecurity. The workshop made clear that addressing maritime insecurity calls for a holistic approach, blending

kinetic and non-kinetic elements. In addition to deploying operational forces, state judicial authorities need to be empowered to better prosecute perpetrators and curb impunity.

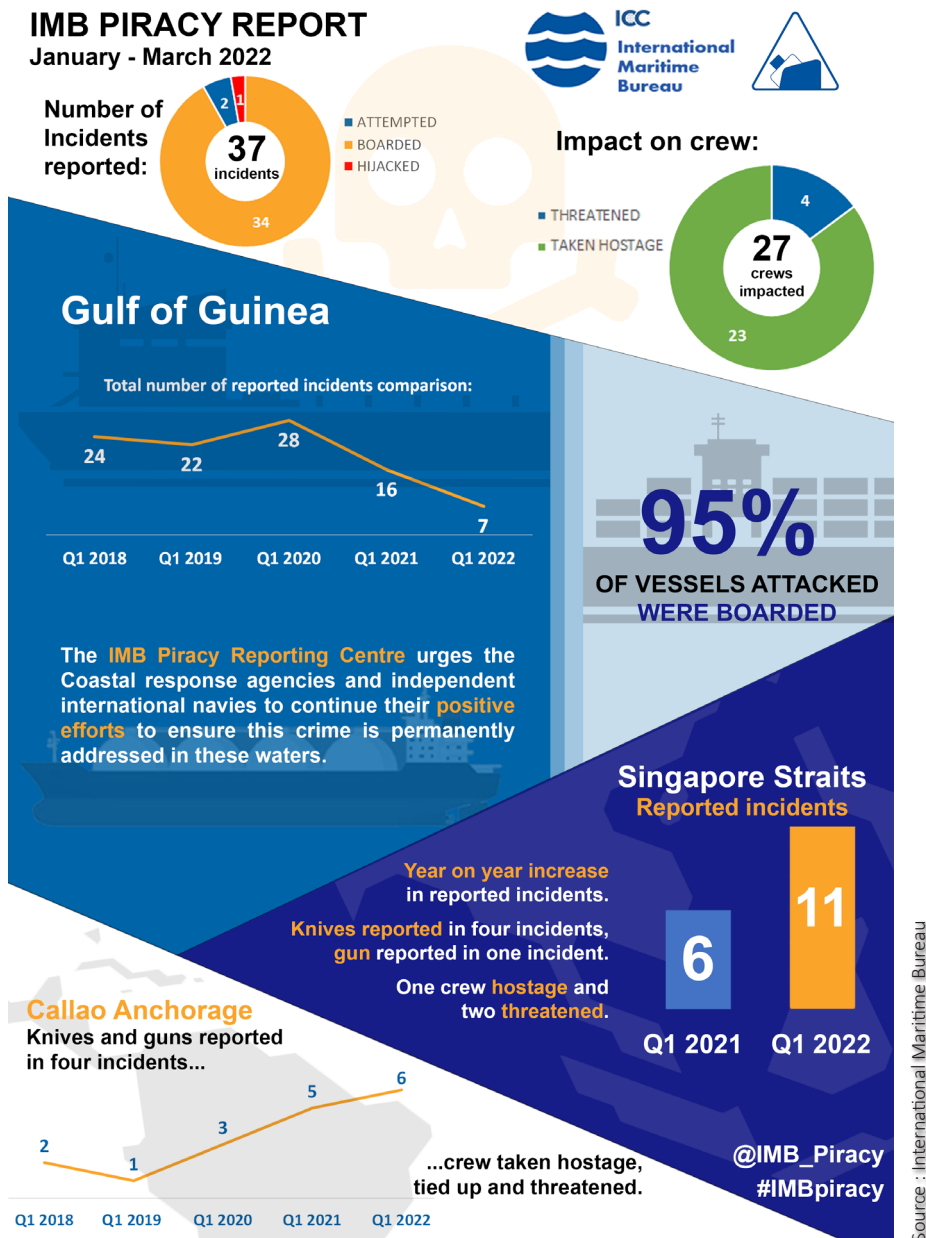
The workshop stressed that it is the lack of sensitization and the absence of political will, that are the driving factors for this weak legal framework which operates in many states at both the regional and continental level. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, shared his concern about the potential synergies between maritime crime and transnational trafficking networks in the Sahel and coastal countries, and emphasized

the importance of information sharing between relevant actors to ensure vigilance against incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Through various sessions, participants discussed a series of issues and themes related to maritime insecurity in the GoG, and relevant ways of strengthening the implementation and the adherence of ECOWAS member states to the legal framework. The workshop concluded with a set of recommendations: build the capacity of African

States to domesticate relevant legal instruments such as the 2005 Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Maritime Navigation (SUA) and the Lomé Charter. States are encouraged to address the discrepancies in the 2013 Yaoundé Code of Conduct as a matter of urgency. States are also encouraged to address other types of Maritime crimes, notably drug trafficking, and unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) which continue to threaten peace, security, and development in the sub- region. Fi-

nally, UNOWAS to continue to engage with the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (G7++ FoGG) forum along with the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) to assess the implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture.



“To adopt a proactive approach that will find impact on the ground, states need to carry out their obligations”.



Amb. Namira Negm
Director of the African Migration Observatory
African Union

Ambassador Negm is the current Director of the AU African Migration Observatory and a seasoned diplomat. Prior to the assumption of this position, she served as Legal Counsel and Director of Department of Legal Affairs of the African Union (2017–2022) and Ambassador of Egypt to Rwanda (2014–2017). She believes there are many steps that can be taken to improve maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

What is your assessment of the maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and the existent legal framework?

I think a lot of efforts are being exerted by the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea (GoG), the African Union (AU) and other partners to strengthen the security and the legal framework applicable to the illegal activities taking place there. However, more is required to enhance the implementation strategies and powers of GoG states to carry out their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and other regional legal instruments.

Despite jurisdictional gaps arising from existing legal instruments, mostly related to new technologies used by perpetrators to commit illicit activities, UNCLOS has established a comprehensive legal regime to counter piracy, illicit trafficking of persons and drugs. So, in brief, to adopt a proactive approach that will find impact on the ground, states need to carry out their obligations... be it flag states, port states or boarding states. Political will and ability to conduct trials are a must. This should be combined with strengthening naval capacities to conduct hot pursuits and arrest suspects. We should focus on what we have and build on it in tandem with studying any

gap that we may find therein, otherwise the crime will remain on the rise while we are still trying to negotiate another legal instrument.

What are the reasons behind this reluctance of African States to ratify the Lomé Charter and what should be done at this level?

States are under many obligations outside of the Lomé charter, some of them don't see why they should sign yet another document addressing issues already codified under international law. Others see the new obligations in the Charter go beyond their obligations under UNCLOS and they

are not interested in accepting those. Also, since the Lomé charter addresses all types of water, not only seas, i.e., inland waterways, including rivers and lakes, it touches upon other sets of legal obligations that might also contribute to state reluctance to ratify. Let's also not forget that the Annexes of this Charter are yet to be finalized, in other words, it's incomplete. This means many states can't present it to their parliaments as it stands, instead they must wait for the entire document to be ratified.

I believe that a study should be conducted to understand the reasons behind the reluctance of states to ratify this Charter, under the supervision of an ad hoc Ministerial Committee. This committee would then evaluate the outcome of the study before submitting to heads of states for a decision

on whether to review the Charter or keep it as is.

The 2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIM) has existed since 2014, what is the best way forward to implement this strategy which links maritime safety and security to development and a blue economy?

Firstly, I believe we need to strengthen coordination between the many AU departments working on the implementation. Secondly, we must strengthen the task force between the AU Commission, Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other relevant stakeholders in order to draw a road map that will enhance its implementation. This would be in line with an annual review of what has been done and what's yet to be carried out. Furthermore,

monitoring progress on obligations stemming from the strategy is crucial to follow-up the implementation in an effective and efficient manner.

How best could we address the issues related to discrepancies in the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (discrepancies related to interpretation)?

It's impossible to have one harmonized interpretation of a legal document, so I believe rather than trying to harmonize interpretation, it's better to review the salient points that are controversial or yet to be carried out to reach an agreement on them. The celebration of 10 years since the adoption of the code is a prime opportunity to do that – namely to review controversial points in order to strengthen the document and ensure it serves its purpose.



Gulf of Guinea fishing boats congregate below the battlements of Cape Coast Castle (1637), Ghana. - Photo by David Stanley - Flickr

Women and Young People reinvigorate peace and security efforts in the region



Participants at the annual meeting of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel

From the 19 -23 September 2022, UNOWAS in cooperation with UN Women, organized the annual meeting of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWYPS-WAS). The objective of this meeting was to strengthen capacity in peace mobilization.

Around 30 women and youths from the sub-region gathered in Monrovia, Liberia to discuss ways of strengthening synergies in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 2250 (2015), and subsequent resolutions on women, youth, peace, and security. The meeting opened in the presence of the Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Mr. Parleh Harris, Mr. Niels Scott, UN Resident Coordinator in Liberia, and Ms. Josephine Nkrumah, ECOWAS Resident Representative in Liberia

During the week, women and youth actors in the sub-region received training, particularly in the areas of project planning and resource mobilization. This equipped participants with tangible skills that will help them initiate

and conduct programs aimed at the effective implementation of Resolution 1325 and 2250 in their home countries.

An additional aspect of the week-long meeting was the marking of the International Day of Peace on 21 September by the organizers and participant's presence and participation in a celebration organized by the Liberian government. The celebration highlighted the vital role of women in Liberia's peace efforts.

The events of the week, which included presentations by each participating country on their activities, best practices, and recommendations, contributed to the establishment of a conclusive 2023 workplan. This workplan for

the upcoming year puts focus on the thematic issues of strategic advocacy, role of the diaspora, impact of climate change, gender mainstreaming, post Covid-19 recovery and the engagement of civil society actors in the region.

Established in April 2009, the WGWYPS-WAS is an inclusive platform for experience sharing, analysis, and participatory evaluation of initiatives and efforts in the West African and Sahel region for the promotion and implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions on the involvement of women and youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms.

The Sahel in crisis

Since 2021, humanitarian needs rose from 13.2 million to 14.7 million people in need across the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) increase in a single year. However, **the Sahel is more than a humanitarian crisis**. It is a multi-faceted crisis in the areas of protection, education, nutrition, socio-economic and community systems, which has been exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic and Ukraine-Russia war which has diverted funds, attention and affected prices here and everywhere.

It is a WASH crisis...

Water scarcity is becoming a driver of conflict in the region

Attacks and chronic instability has deprived hundreds of thousands of people from adequately accessing clean water

Some 7.4 million people are water insecure today



It is a nutrition crisis...

16 million people will face food insecurity in 2022, the highest caseload recorded since 2014

Nearly 1 million children are expected to suffer from **severe acute malnutrition** in Central Sahel this year

Acute **food insecurity** in West Africa is up **40% this year** compared with 2021 and over **400,000 children** are already suffering from severe acute malnutrition

It is an education crisis...

Over 5,000 schools are **forcibly closed** due to **attacks** and threats of **violence**

Increased attacks on education during 2020 and 2021 **disrupted** the education of almost **one million learners** in the Central Sahel region

More than **9 million children and adolescents** are **out of school**

The life of a child kept out of school is a tragedy of unfulfilled potential and lost opportunity

It is a protection crisis

6 million children, particularly girls, are in need of protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation or child marriage.

In 2022, over **3.2 million children** will need protection

In 2021, **grave violations against children** have increased by **58%** compared to 2020

Over **50%** of **young women in the Sahel married during their childhood**; levels are highest in Central Sahel, where seven in ten young women were child brides

The West Africa region is home to **seven out of ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage worldwide** (Burkina Faso, CAR, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Nigeria)