



UNOWAS Magazine

Together for Peace

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



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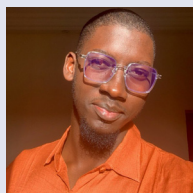


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Leonardo Santos SIMAO

Représentant spécial du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel et Chef de l'UNOWAS/CNMC

The Cameroon–Nigeria Mixed Commission nears completion

The 6th Extraordinary Session of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CMCN), held in Yaoundé on June 26 and 27, marked a decisive step towards the completion of the demarcation process of the common border between the two countries, initiated more than two decades ago following the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Despite the many challenges they have faced over the years, Cameroon and Nigeria, two major neighboring countries, have always maintained the same commitment and the same objective: peaceful resolution of the border dispute in the interests of both peoples, through dialogue and consultation.

It would not be an exaggeration to point out that the ongoing commitment of both countries was instilled at the creation of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission on November 15, 2002, by His

Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the late Kofi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations.










This wise and pragmatic vision has served - and continues to serve - as a guide for both countries and their delegations within the CNMC to overcome difficulties and convert them into solutions and agreements, for the benefit of both neighboring peoples.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, I was able, during the 6th Extraordinary Session in Yaoundé, to appreciate the quality of the dialogue between the two delegations, as well as the determination shown by H.E. Mr. Michel Zoah, head of the Cameroon delegation, and H.E. Mr. Abdelattif Fagbemi, SAN, Minister of Justice and head of the Nigerian delegation, to

resolve points of disagreement, and conclude the demarcation process by the end of 2025.

This shared commitment has also led to a common approach to supporting the populations affected by the demarcation activities. To this end, the United Nations country team in Cameroon, notably the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has finalized a report which assesses the socio-economic needs of the populations. A similar report will be finalized in few days by the IOM in Nigeria. For their part, Cameroon and Nigeria have already announced that they will provide the necessary aid to their populations. Indeed, demarcation will be truly completed only if it considers the fate of the populations affected by demarcation activities. The human aspect of any border demarcation process is fundamental, as it forms the basis for living together and peace between the two communities.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNOWAS

-  UNOWAS, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, was established in 2002 as a regional special political mission of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding (DPPA).
-  UNOWAS is headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.
-  UNOWAS implements the mandate given by the United Nations Security Council to prevent crises and conflicts through an active role in preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation.
-  The UNOWAS mandate covers 15 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
-  UNOWAS works closely with the various United Nations entities including 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 consolidate peace and prevent conflicts.
-  UNOWAS supports the 15 countries in their efforts to consolidate good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and management initiatives.
-  UNOWAS supports sub-regional institutions and States in their efforts to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in the sub-region. UNOWAS also contributes to the analysis and assessment of the impact of climate change on security and stability in the sub-region.
-  UNOWAS contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) to support the countries of the Sahel facing multiple challenges such as, security, development, the management of the effects of climate change and the promotion of sustainable development.
-  Special Representative of the Secretary-General is also the Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), 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.
-  CNMC supports the work of border demarcation between Cameroon and Nigeria. It also supports the needs of populations affected by demarcation work. Since its creation, CN has demarcated 2050 km of a border estimated at 2100 km, and built 2213 pillars out of a total estimated at 2969.

Ms. Barrie Freeman takes office as Deputy Special Representative



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced on May 10, 2024, the appointment of Ms. Barrie Freeman of the United States as Deputy Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel. Ms. Freeman, who took office on June 11, 2024, has more than 30 years of experience in the field of peace and security. Since 2021, she has served as deputy special representative of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Prior to that, from 2018 to 2021, she served as Deputy Director and Political Director of the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Ms. Freeman also served as Chief of Staff and Director of Political Affairs of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

16th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel



Speaking at the opening of the 16th meeting of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel held on 24-25 June in Dakar, Senegal, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Leonardo Santos Simao, encouraged the United Nations system to adapt its operations to the ongoing context in the Sahel, and stressed the importance of regional partnerships, including with ECOWAS, the African Union, the Mano River Union and the Accra Initiative, among others. "Regional partnerships are essential to address the challenges facing the region: political transitions, terrorism, insecurity," he said.

UNOWAS participated in the 57th Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security in Central Africa



On 24 May, UNOWAS participated in Luanda, Angola, in the 57th Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The meeting addressed the security situation in Central Africa and the means and approaches needed to address it, including through the strengthening of regional partnerships. In his address, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Leonardo Santos Simao, spoke about transnational organized crime and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and their links with terrorism in the Sahel. In this regard, he highlighted the importance of the Yaoundé Architecture on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea and the Accra Initiative as useful mechanisms to combat these scourges.

UNOWAS and MONUSCO organize a workshop to strengthen the capacities of actors of the Security Sector Reform in Congo



From 2 to 5 July, a workshop to exchange experiences on the Security Sector Reform (SSR) was held in Dakar, organized by UNOWAS and MONUSCO for the benefit of security actors in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Within the framework of Resolution 2717 which calls on MONUSCO to provide support for the strengthening of the capacities of Congolese security institutions, a mixed team of Congolese security actors immersed themselves in the lessons learned and good practices of RSS processes in application in other African countries through various exchanges. Participants also shared their analyses through case studies of RSS in peace, post-crisis and crisis contexts in West Africa: Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.



UNOWAS

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
FOR WEST AFRICA
AND THE SAHEL

BUREAU DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST
ET LE SAHEL



CNMC

CAMEROON-NIGERIA
MIXED COMMISSION



COMMISSION MIXTE
CAMEROUN-NIGERIA

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission determined to finalize demarcation by end 2025



At the 6th Extraordinary Session of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), held in Yaoundé on June 26 and 27, 2024, the two parties chose the path of dialogue to resolve the remaining disputes concerning the demarcation of their common border, which they aim to complete by the end of 2025.

This is a decisive step towards completing the process of demarcating the common border, initiated more than two decades ago by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

The two-day Extraordinary Session held in Yaoundé enabled the two delegations to exchange views on points of disagreement, and to decide on a course of action leading to the definitive demarcation of their common border.

At the instigation of its Chairman, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, the Mixed Commission decided not to refer the matter to the International

Court of Justice (ICJ) for interpretation of the text concerning the resolution of the three outstanding points of disagreement.

These points, yet to be defined, are located along the last 36 km of the 2100 km border, and include the villages of Kodja and Rhumsiki, as well as a boundary marker whose location is disputed. On one side, the Far North region of Cameroon. On the other, Nigeria's Adamawa region. For both villages, the route dating back to 1906 needs to be reviewed, as one village has developed more towards Nigeria, the other towards Cameroon.

"The continued commitment of the two countries, the members of the

CNMC, and the various partners to a peaceful resolution of the border dispute, is a duty. We must accomplish it together for the sake of both populations, peace, security and prosperity in the region and beyond", said Mr. Simão, adding that we must avoid missing an opportunity to work together to overcome difficulties along the way.

Echoing this commitment, the two sides also adopted a roadmap aimed at completing border demarcation by the end of 2025.

"All this will soon be behind us, as both parties have expressed their willingness to conclude this matter amicably and in a way that is beneficial to both

sides. We want to achieve a situation where there are no winners and no losers. I am delighted with the attitude of both parties,” declared Mr. Abdelatif Fagbemi, SAN, Minister of Justice and head of the Nigerian delegation, at the end of the two-day meeting.

Noting the need to provide substantial assistance to the populations affected by the demarcation work, the Mixed Commission welcomed the support of the UN agencies, and particularly that of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Cameroon, which provided a report on the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation in the Far North, North and Adamaoua regions. A similar report for Nigeria, covering the states of Cross River, Borno and Adamaoua, is currently being finalized.

“The United Nations system in Cameroon is totally determined and committed to supporting the efforts of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission to ensure that people can live together in peace and stability along the borders. We will also continue to work with other development partners,

so that the needs that have been assessed for these populations can be included in the programs and projects of the various development partners, but also encourage and work in terms of advocacy so that the assessment of these needs is also included in national budgets,” emphasized the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cameroon, Mr. Siaka Coulibaly.

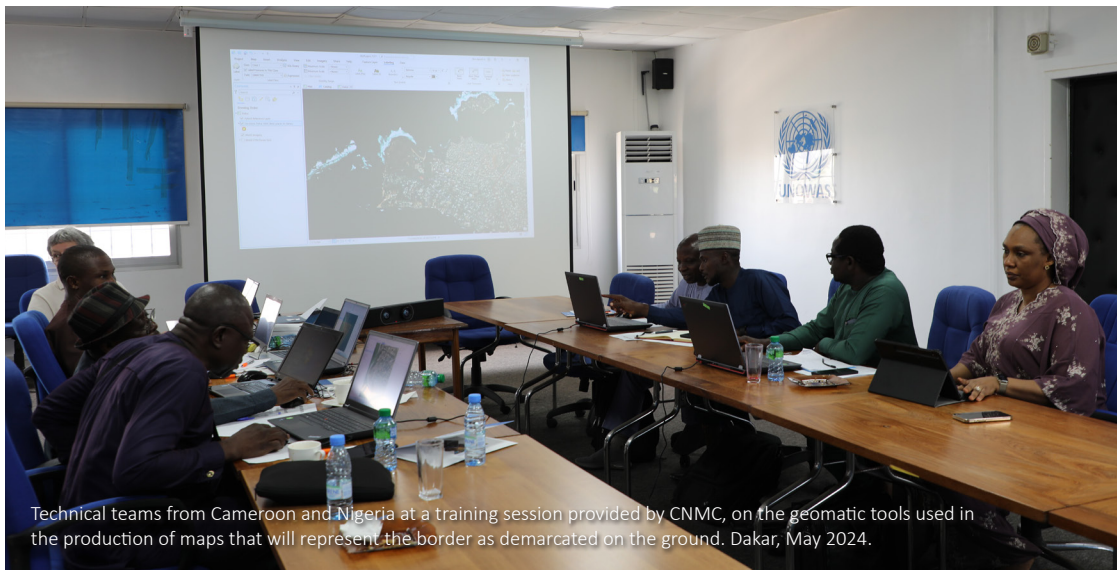
According to Abdel Rahmane Diop, IOM Head of Mission in Cameroon, the UN agency that led the joint IOM, CMCN and Cameroon Delegation (DELCAM) needs assessment mission to Cameroon’s far north, north and adamawa regions, member states already have many activities, many actions, many strategies planned for the affected populations and regions. “So, one of the key actions for us is to advocate so that these cross-border populations are not left behind, and that they are integrated into existing national strategies,” he said.

Created to implement the 2002 decision of the International Court of Justice on the Bakassi Peninsula, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission is well on the way to achieving a major objective. A unique case in Africa, ac-

cording to Joint Commission Chairman Leonardo Santos Simão.



The continued commitment of the two countries, the members of the CNMC, and the various partners to a peaceful resolution of the border dispute, is a duty. We must accomplish it together for the sake of both populations, peace, security and prosperity in the region and beyond



Technical teams from Cameroon and Nigeria at a training session provided by CNMC, on the geomatic tools used in the production of maps that will represent the border as demarcated on the ground. Dakar, May 2024.



**Lateef Fagbemi,
attorney general,
minister of justice of
Nigeria and head of
Nigeria delegation to
the CNMC**

“I am very confident that very soon we will have this matter resolved.”

1. What is your assessment of the conclusions of this extraordinary Session?

If you look at it from the background, initially we had 13 grey areas. We have resolved about ten, remaining three. It's a high-powered meeting that we have held attracting ministers from one country and the other to come and sort out the remaining grey areas. It underscores the importance that we attach to these issues. From my reading of what transpired yesterday, I am hopeful that very soon we will put everything behind us, because both parties have expressed willingness to conclude this matter amicably and in the manner that what we do will be beneficial to both sides. We want to achieve a situation of no victoried, no vanquished. I'm happy about the attitude of both sides. I am very confident that very soon we will have this matter resolved.

2. What are now the main priorities the CNMC should address ?

We are going back to the sub-commission. They will meet and critically examine the three areas that are outstanding and revert to us very soon. It's a job that requires some technical touches. You know, we would need to do the demarcation again, the mapping of the areas so that we know which side belongs to which country. These are

some of the things that they would have to touch. And like I said, soon we'll have the results of this exercise because we all committed to having this matter put behind us soonest, latest by 2025.

3. Demarcation activities have affected some areas and populations. What is your message to the communities who have been impacted?

This was also part of what we discussed. We have been discussing how to resolve this matter in a manner that will not negatively impact the two populations. We have those for Cameroon, those for Nigeria. We are trying to see how the mapping out, the demarcation of the two areas will not affect the commercial activities and the daily lives of the people. I'm aware that both sides are also committed to ensuring that we put massive infrastructure development in the affected areas. But in the meantime, I want to appeal to the people living in the two areas to continue to live peacefully. Nigeria and Cameroon have come a very, very long way, this one will not divide us. Rather it will strengthen our relationship in terms of how it affects them. There is no way you will treat this type of situation that will not have one or two areas of concern. What is important is the ability of the two sides to ensure that you put it at the barest minimum. That is the intention and we are both committed to this.

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 urgency for us today is how to meet the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation »



Abdel Rahmane Diop
IOM Head of Mission in Cameroon

A joint mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Cameroon-Nigeria Joint Commission (CMCN) and the Delegation of Cameroon (DELCAM) was carried out in the Far North, North and Adamawa regions of Cameroon. The objective: to assess the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation of the border between the two countries. UNOWAS Magazine went to meet Mr. Abdel Rahmane Diop, IOM Chief of Mission in Cameroon. He tells us about the needs of these populations and the urgent actions to be taken.

The mandate of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC) is to facilitate the peaceful implementation of the International Court of Justice's ruling on the cross-border dispute between the two countries. How does the International Organization for Migration (IOM) collaborate with the CNMC?

First of all, it must be said that IOM's work is part of a mandate entrusted

ed to it by its Member States. Today, IOM has 174 Member States, including Cameroon and Nigeria. And we have in our principles this desire to defend, to support countries that engage in South-South cooperation. It was quite natural for the organization, which has the issue of border management in its mandate, to appreciate its true value, first, the reference to the International Court of Justice to settle the dispute and, second, the leadership of the two

countries to set up a joint commission to ensure the implementation of the decision of the Court.

So, our job was to get in touch with this commission and to see to what extent IOM can support it in the implementation of its mandate. First, it is to support States for demarcation and then to focus on the last two components of this mandate that are symbolically anchored in IOM's work, namely the

response to the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation, and the establishment of an infrastructure that will strengthen trust between Cameroon and Nigeria.

There was recently a joint mission funded by IOM and the delegation of Cameroon that was carried out precisely to assess the needs of the populations affected by this demarcation. What motivated such an initiative and what is your assessment of it?

The motivation for this initiative, once again, is rooted in the mandate that has been entrusted to the Cameroon-Nigeria Joint Commission. It should also be said that the Global Compact for Migration, which was adopted by Member States in December 2018, also serves as a reference here. It has made it possible to set up, at the country level, United Nations teams to support Member States in the implementation of this Compact. In the case of Cameroon, we have what we call the United Nations Network on Migration. So, for IOM, as Chair of this UN network, it was a matter of mobilizing the entire system under the banner of the Resident Coordinator to assess the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation.

As I said earlier, this mandate that has been entrusted to the CNMC is of interest to us in more ways than one. Before any intervention, in view of the tools that the organization has developed to understand the needs of populations on the move, it was totally natural that we go into the field to try to understand in detail and by sector the needs of these populations affected by the demarcation.

So, the work was an extremely coordinated and satisfying mission. It was the implementation of what we call an

integrated approach of the United Nations. We have been able to get other agencies of the UN system to work together. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the leadership of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system, but also that of the Government of Cameroon.

At the Yaoundé level, we brought them together, sensitized them, in order to work together and develop a questionnaire agreed by all stakeholders. We touched the areas we wanted to investigate, namely water, electricity, health and economic issues. So, together, we developed the questionnaire based on a tool that IOM has developed and approved by its Member States, the Displacement Crossing matrix, one of its sub-tools, is the multisectoral assessment of population needs.

Then, we went to the regional level to meet with the governors, heads of departments, mayors in order to get their support. Once this was done, the mis-



We were in three regions in total, the Far North, the North and Adamawa on the Cameroon side. We visited 70 villages. We spoke to 3,000 people with a ratio of 1,000 people per region. We hope that this is representative. Of course, it is not all of these populations, but it gives us an idea.

sion continued to reach, this time, the populations themselves with a microphone in their mouths to know: what they need; How does this demarcation impact them; And what they expect precisely from the States that have the leadership, of course, in terms of addressing the needs of the populations.

You have just presented the results of this evaluation mission. What are the highlights? What should we keep in mind?

What should be learned is that from the point of view of the methodology that was used, 3,000 people were interviewed. We were in three regions in total, the Far North, the North and Adamawa on the Cameroon side. We visited 70 villages. We spoke to 3,000 people with a ratio of 1,000 people per region. We hope that this is representative. Of course, it is not all of these populations, but it gives us an idea.

From these results, what emerges is that there are challenges in terms of access to water and energy. 75% of the populations surveyed believe that they do not have public lighting and no electricity in their homes. But what is interesting is to realize that there is a lack of lighting even in some public services. The water points are not lit, and you know very well what this can mean in terms of safety issues. The second point that came up was the loss of agricultural land. You know, in our countries, the relationship to agriculture is more than a question of economic resources, it is sometimes ancestral and unfortunately, some people have lost their land in the name of demarcation. The third interesting result to observe is in terms of access to health services. There is a good proportion of the population, 97%, who reported having access to primary care. Of course, there are gaps in terms of access to community health workers, also in terms



IOM Cameroon agents conducting field interviews.
Photo : IOM Cameroon 2022

of access to vaccination. So, there are several socio-economic sectors for which we have noted gaps that have been quantified and sectorized. And that's important here. We were able to inventory and put by sector, the needs expressed by the populations themselves.

You have just listed a lot of needs, What are the urgent actions?

Thank you very much for the question. We are advocating with our colleagues in Nigeria so that the same work can be done with the purpose of the symbiosis or symphony that has animated Cameroon and Nigeria in the management of this issue can also be reflected in the understanding of the needs of the populations. To come back to your question, the urgency for us today is

how to meet the needs of these populations affected by the demarcation. We have quantified them, so we are taking advantage of the visits of senior representatives of the United Nations system here in Cameroon to raise awareness and seek their leadership in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources.

Moreover, it must be said that we have noted that the member states of the CNMC already have many activities, many actions, many strategies that they have planned in relation to access to these populations or regions. So, one of the key actions for us is to make a plea so that these populations are not left behind.

How can we ensure that border populations are integrated into existing

national strategies? And I will make a confidence, my last exchange with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Local Development made it possible



5% of the populations surveyed believe that they do not have public lighting and no electricity in their homes. But what is interesting is to realize that there is a lack of lighting even in some public services

to identify that the development plans of the municipalities concerned will be revised in the near future. And we agreed together that mayors had to integrate the needs of these populations into their municipal plans.

So, I think that this leadership of the States is an important first step. The second step, as I said, is the mobilization of resources through events, whether with the private sector, which is also an actor mentioned in the Global Compact for Migration, or with bilateral and multilateral partners.

What's next?

The next step is to carry out this advocacy with the various partners, the various stakeholders that I have mentioned, with the hope that very quickly we will have firm positions, amounts that will be promised, and clear commitments from the partners of the States, the international financial institutions and the private sector so that we can translate these needs into projects, and at that time, Bringing

lighting where there is none. Lighting schools, building a water point and providing lighting. Ensure that the stations we visited are equipped.

But above all, it is the strategic aspect. How do we ensure that the UN Secretary-General's agenda for durable solutions for IDPs is addressed? How can we create a holistic approach so that we do not work in silos, but that the consideration of these multiple needs is understood holistically and addressed in the same way?

A final word.

The final word is to pay tribute to the leadership of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, who has been very attentive and sensitive to this issue since he took office and who has shown extraordinary leadership. Of course, all the offices of the IOM organization in Geneva and Dakar, which covers West and Central Africa, are mobilized to ensure that the needs of these populations are

understood and addressed in the best possible way.



There are several socio-economic sectors for which we have noted gaps that have been quantified and sectorized. And that's important here. We were able to inventory and put by sector, the needs expressed by the populations themselves.



The IOM team in Cameroon presenting the report to the Chairman of the CMCN and the heads of delegation from the two countries.

SRSB Simão “in the face of multiple challenges, UNOWAS will stay the course”



SRSB Simão meets journalists after his briefing to the Security Council.
Photo : UN Photos

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, who has been at the head of UNOWAS and the CNMC for a year now, has spared no effort or energy to crisscross the capitals of the countries of the sub-region and beyond.

Meeting and listening to all interlocutors is a necessity, a priority on a daily basis in order to understand the nature of the difficulties, to mitigate and resolve tensions, and to better support the various initiatives that contribute to the strengthening of peace, the rule of law and development in a sub-region which, despite significant progress, continues to face multiple challenges.

In constant coordination with regional partners and the United Nations system serving in the 16 countries covered by the UNOWAS mandate, the

Special Representative is acting in a regional and coordinated approach to find, with the parties concerned, adequate responses to these multiple challenges.

This is evidenced by his speech at the 65th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja, Nigeria, on July 7. “The UN will continue to support national and regional efforts to ensure peace and stability, strengthen democracy and good governance, including through inclusive political processes, and socio-economic devel-

opment, with a focus on the economic empowerment of women and youth,” he said.

Emphasizing the importance of a regional approach to conflict prevention, Mr. Simão commended the Government of Sierra Leone and the All Peoples Congress for their dedicated efforts to find peaceful solutions to their differences, making the interest of the Sierra Leonean people their shared priority. This was achieved through the efforts of the joint UNOWAS-ECOWAS-AU mission that he co-led with the former Vice-President of the Republic



The UN will continue to support national and regional efforts to secure peace and stability, strengthen democracy and good governance, including through inclusive political processes, and socio-economic development, with a focus on the economic empowerment of women and youth.

of The Gambia, Fatoumata Tambajang, to support the implementation of the Sierra Leone National Unity Agreement.

Echoing the situation in West Africa and the Sahel, the Special Representative gave an update to the members of the United Nations Security Council on 12 July, during his presentation on 12 July of the Secretary-General's report on the ongoing developments in the countries of the subregion.

Mr. Simão, painted a worrying picture of the sub-region marked, according to him, by "growing insecurity, a worsening of humanitarian crises, and a lack of strong cooperation between States to effectively address challenges, particularly in terms of security". Indeed, insecurity, especially in the Sahel, continues to cause suffering among the population with an estimated seven million people who have been internally displaced or have fled across borders. "Despite sustained efforts and heavy material and human sacrifices, these numbers have risen further, leaving millions of people dependent on humanitarian assistance," the Special Representative said.

In his briefing to the Council, he stressed that democratic progress has emerged in the sub-region, par-

ticularly with the successful conduct of presidential elections in Senegal, Liberia, and Mauritania, where he had visited on the eve of the presidential election, on June 28, for a three-day visit during which he called on Mauritanians "to seize this opportunity to contribute to the consolidation of the country's democratic gains." However, the recurrent restriction of political and civic space, especially in countries in transition, worries Mr. M. Simão: "Transitional regimes have postponed the return to constitutional order, raising fears of prolonged uncertainty. While human rights organizations report abuses against civilians, new laws and policies have limited civil liberties in countries in transition, with allegations of human rights violations deepening communal divides. He alerted the members of the Council, before insisting that "in the face of multiple challenges, UNOWAS will stay the course" to continue working with national, regional and international partners to contribute to the consolidation of peace, security and democracy in West Africa and the Sahel.



65th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Abuja, Nigeria, on July 7.

“The United Nations has positioned itself as a privileged partner alongside the authorities and the population to meet the challenges of development in Togo”



Abdou Dieng
Resident Coordinator a.i. of the United Nations
in Togo

Mr. Abdou Dieng, Resident Coordinator a.i. of the United Nations in Togo, talks about the organization’s support towards solidarity, peace, access to basic social services, as well as the fight against violent extremism and the strengthening of the rule of law.

You’ve been RC in Togo since mid-March 2024. What can you tell us about this country?

Togo is a country in the Gulf of Guinea known for its political and security stability. In recent years, this stability has been disrupted in its northern part by the spillover of the Sahel crisis. This situation has led to the presence of some 37,000 asylum seekers and 10,000 internally displaced persons.

Togo has recently undergone constitutional reform, with a change of political regime from a presidential to a parliamentary system. Under the new constitution, Togo will be governed by a President of the Council, who has full power, alongside a President of the Republic, who symbolizes national unity. Both will be elected by the Congress, which brings together the National Assembly and the Senate. Following the legislative and regional elections of

April 29, 2024, the country has a new National Assembly and regional councilors from whom some of the senators will be drawn.

Togo has an estimated population of 8,095,498 as of 2022, of which 51.3% are women and 48.7% men, with young people accounting for an estimated 75% of the total population. Positioned as a logistics and economic hub, the country is experiencing a re-

sumption of economic growth following an overall drop in production related to the COVID 19 pandemic. GDP growth is around 5.4%.

Togo's economy is essentially based on agriculture, and its deep-water port enables the export of products such as clinker, phosphates, cotton and soya, among others. The port also enables the transit of manufactured goods to hinterland countries.

The United Nations system has been present in Togo for a long time. What is your assessment of the role of the UN role and its partnership with the Togolese government?

The United Nations in Togo represents a group of 24 agencies, including 14 agencies with a physical presence and 10 non-resident agencies.

The United Nations has positioned itself as a privileged partner alongside the authorities and the population to meet the challenges of development in Togo by strengthening human capital, supporting access to quality basic social services and social protection, and promoting an institutional governance framework that strengthens the sustainability of development initiatives. More specifically, through the 2023-2026 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the United Nations system is committed, in full alignment with the government's 2020-2025 roadmap, to supporting the country in realizing its vision of "A peaceful Togo, a modern Nation with inclusive and sustainable economic growth".

To achieve this, the United Nations first supports the country in defining its strategic orientations, notably through the National Development Plan and various sectoral policy documents (education, health, sustainable food,

energy, environment, etc.) aligned with the State's international commitments. Secondly, the agencies, funds and programs support the operational implementation of national policies by providing the necessary expertise and technical support, notably through South-South cooperation and digitalization, to ensure the contextualization of approaches and national ownership. The United Nations also supports projects with high catalytic value, concrete actions on the ground that transform lives.

Concretely, what are the significant results the UN in Togo has achieved in 2023? Can you enumerate some of them?

In coordination with the government and partners, the UN played a critical role in achieving significant results last year. Some of them can be summarized as follows:

MDG indicator monitoring, aid management, labor market intelligence and animal disease monitoring have been improved through the implementation and/or updating of 4 digital platforms.

Around 25,000 children without administrative documents have acquired an identity thanks to the delivery of suppletive judgments through the creation of 70 civil status spaces in the Savanes region.

15 communes were equipped to draw up and implement communal development plans and monitor projects through the deployment of 35 national volunteers.

2,500 victims of gender-based violence received holistic care (psychological, medical and legal) at listening centers. 10% of cases were referred to the courts.



The construction of 24 new classrooms and the distribution of school supplies to 105 schools have enhanced the quality of access to education and continuity of learning, including for displaced pupils.

More than 2,000 people, including 668 young people, 104 returnees and 572 women, as well as 35 very small and medium-sized enterprises and 41 cooperatives, have received entrepreneurial training, boosting their competitiveness on the market.

72.5 hectares of land were reforested/restored and over 160,000 seedlings were planted.

The construction of 24 new classrooms and the distribution of school supplies to 105 schools have enhanced the quality of access to education and continuity of learning, including for displaced pupils. More than 16,000 children in 50 schools benefited from a school canteen service.

Some 400,000 people have benefited from sexual and reproductive health services, HIV/AIDS care and family planning.

2,500 victims of gender-based violence received holistic care (psychological, medical and legal) at the listening centers. 10% of cases were referred to the courts.

More than 130,000 people, including 63,000 women, have access to drinking water through the construction and rehabilitation of over 60 bore-holes.

What are your priorities for 2024?

For this year, the United Nations in Togo intends to work primarily in the Savannas region alongside the Togolese government and with all partners, donors and populations to tackle, through the Programme d'Urgence pour la Région des Savanes (PURS), the problems created by the spillover of the Sahel crisis with the massive arrival of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The priorities of the United Nations this year are aligned with those of the Togolese government, notably solidarity, peace, access to basic social services, the fight for the inclusion of

all, the fight against violent extremism and the strengthening of the rule of law. These priorities are in line with our mandate, and our actions are all directed in this direction. In 2024, the UN will consider good practices and lessons learned to scale up interventions and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. The Country Team will reinforce intervention synergies through cross-cutting programmatic adjustments, while adapting to changes in the national context in particular:

Provide greater support for young people and women in the field of entrepreneurship, the development of economic activities and the strengthening of the startup ecosystem.

Support the government in the development of public policies contributing to the proper management of human mobility in the context of climate change.

Develop economic activities to reduce pressure on natural resources and implement land-use planning and management tools for sites with high biodiversity potential.

Support the government in its social protection policy.

Support the development and implementation of specific strategies and action plans in the field of social services and contribute to equitable access to basic social services.

Strengthen actions to promote the rights of people at risk of being left behind.

Support dialogue on governance and social cohesion.

Strengthen support for the Quality and Disaggregated Data for Decision-Making system.



RC Abdou Dieng on field visit in Togo



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



The Sahel humanitarian crisis deserves immediate attention and action: What is the world waiting for?



Tree quarters of those in need of humanitarian aid in Mali are women and children.
Photo: OCHA Mali 2023 / Alioune Ndiaye

The suffering of women, children and men across the Sahel has done nothing but deepen over the past decades. Chronic underdevelopment and poverty, as well as overlapping crises driven by conflict, insecurity and the impacts of the climate change are causing alarming levels of hunger, forced displacement, and health hazards. Destruction of homes, schools, medical centres and other essential infrastructure, means of livelihoods, as well as agricultural land and livestock

are widespread. Today, close to 33 million women, children and men in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria need humanitarian assistance and protection. And life, really, is a daily fight for hand-to-mouth survival.

In about five years, the number of security incidents in the Sahel has increased fivefold and the crisis in the Central Sahel – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – is spilling over to Mauritania



In the first quarter of 2024, nearly 1,350 people are estimated to have been killed in violent incidents in the Central Sahel

and the northern areas of the Gulf of Guinea countries.

Protection of human life and people's fundamental rights and dignity remains the most urgent humanitarian need in the Sahel. In the first quarter of 2024, nearly 1,350 people are estimated to have been killed in violent incidents in the Central Sahel. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project, this figure has risen steadily in recent years and is 66 per cent higher than in the same quarter last year.

In addition to the death tolls, these attacks against civilians continue to uproot entire families and villages, sometimes multiple times, often for years and years. More than 7 million people (7% of the Sahel population), mostly women and children, are currently displaced across the Sahel.

Basic services are also directly affected, with some 10,000 schools and 1,200 health centres not functional.

The various effects of climate change exacerbate the vulnerabilities of populations in the region. Temperatures are rising 1.5 times faster in the Sahel than in the other parts of the world, and residents – who contribute relatively little to global carbon emissions – are some of the hardest-hit by the effects of climate change, including flooding, drought, high temperatures and land degradation. The intensifying severity of extreme weather events and environmental issues, coupled with the lack of preventive measures and sustainable coping strategies in communities in the region are accelerating the destruction of people's lives and livelihoods.

Food security estimates for the region suggest that 14 per cent of the Sahel population (more than 16 million people)

are struggling to feed themselves during the current lean season. That's more than a 12 per cent increase over 2023 (+ 1.8 million people).

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, particularly, access to people in need is increasingly challenging. Security, logistical and administrative constraints compound each other, delaying aid provision, and making it more expensive to deliver aid or, in the worst cases, preventing delivery altogether.

In 2023, aid operations in the Sahel were generously supported by donors and humanitarians were able to provide life-saving services and protection to about 15.6 million people. However, as needs go up and our ability to support affected people effectively goes down, funding also struggles to keep up with the growing need. Last year, the humanitarian response plans for the six Sahel countries received barely a third of the funding needed to be implemented fully. For 2024, as of early July, humanitarian programmes in the six countries of the Sahel had received US\$ 936.9 million – less than a fifth of the US\$ 4.7 billion which would be needed to fully implement the region's humanitarian plans.

Yet, despite this complex operating environment, humanitarians understand they have to adapt to achieve more with less and continue to do everything possible to reach those who need it most.

In support of national governments and local partners, the humanitarian sector is deploying innovative approaches and strategies to ensure that communities themselves are at the heart of humanitarian responses and that local partners' expertise is tapped into, to harness the power of anticipatory action to prevent and mitigate crises, to make greater use of technology and to develop meaningful cross-border

approaches to tackling regional crises. But without increased funding, we will not be able to save as many lives as needed.

Millions of people across the Sahel are relying on humanitarian aid this year again, with more urgency than ever before. There is a window of opportunity now that we cannot miss.

We must mobilize resources and step up our collective efforts to prevent the crises of the Sahel from worsening and spreading more widely.

Contribution from Charles Bernimolin, Head of OCHA's Regional Office for West and Central Africa



Today, close to 33 million women, children and men in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria need humanitarian assistance and protection. And life, really, is a daily fight for hand-to-mouth survival.

The West African Bar Association, ready to defend the rule of law and respect for human rights



Participants at the annual conference of the West African Bar Association (WABA) in Cotonou, Benin.

Supported by UNOWAS, the annual conference of the West African Bar Association (WABA) held from 25 to 27 June 2024, in Cotonou, Benin, adopted its new statutes and elected its new Executive Committee.

The promotion of the rule of law, respect for human rights and accession to international human rights instruments in West Africa remain major challenges, especially in a context of the challenge to some democratic gains at the West African level.

Despite some positive developments in recent years, the region continues to face a myriad of complex challenges, including weak governance, political instability and deteriorating security situation in some countries, shrinking civic space, muzzling of fundamental rights and freedoms, in addition to



Professional practices may sometimes be different, but the common sharing of law will continue to serve as a link.

perceptions of recurrent manipulations of the judicial system.

Addressing these challenges in such a context requires a multidimensional approach and continued commitment. To this end, UNOWAS has pursued its efforts since the holding of regional conferences in November 2011 and September 2018, in Bamako and Niamey respectively, on impunity, human rights and justice, to activate the networking of key players such as ministers of justice, magistrates, human rights organizations and lawyers.

In addition to its efforts to support the establishment of the Forum of Ministers of Justice of the countries of the Sub-region, UNOWAS has facilitated the establishment of a network of lawyers through the revitalization of the West African Bar Association (WABA), established more than a decade ago.

After the first edition that took place in August 2023 in Accra, Ghana, UNOWAS supported the organization of the annual conference of the WABA, from 25 to 27 June 2024, in Cotonou, Benin.

Bringing together 40 participants, this meeting allowed the adoption of WABA's new statutes and the election of the new Executive Committee which is composed of five people, including

two women, representing the three language groups of the sub-region, including the bars of Mali for the Presidency, Liberia for the Vice-Presidency, Nigeria for the General Secretariat, Guinea Bissau for the Deputy General Secretariat, and Sierra Leone for the Treasury.

Ousmane Bouba Traore, President of the Bar of Mali, new President of WABA, called on all his colleagues in West Africa "to work for the development of this new umbrella association that brings together Francophones, Anglophones and Lusophones."

This meeting was also an opportunity for participants to discuss the role of the lawyer in the quest for free and independent justice, respect for human

rights and the rule of law as well as the promotion of democratic governance.

As part of its mandate, UNOWAS will continue to support WABA so that it can fully play its role in defending the interests of the corporation and contribute to the promotion of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

The new president of WABA, Mr. Traore, remains optimistic about the future of this association rich with its diversity, whose "professional practices may sometimes be different, but the common sharing of law will continue to serve as a link".



Ousmane Bouba Traore, President of the Bar of Mali, new President of WABA

ECOWAS and UNOWAS committed to supporting youth participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding

At the initiative of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Youth-Voices-for-Change Summit under the theme «Digital Innovation, Inclusivity, Regional Growth, Peace and Stability» was held in Accra, Ghana, from 5 to 6 June 2024.

In collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), ECOWAS initiated the organization of the Youth-Voices-for-Change Summit. The objective was to stimulate youth energies through digital innovations to address regional challenges of unemployment, irregular migration, insecurity, educational gaps, healthcare ills, poverty, criminality, poor governance, mis-/disinformation and violent extremism, among others. It also aimed to develop key strategic messages from West African Youth for the Summit of the Future and core priorities to be integrated in the Pact of the Future.

For two days, youth from the sub-region analyzed the current peace and security situation in the region as well as the role of technology in accelerating regional stability and growth. They also considered the existence of scarcely promoted, yet very relevant initiatives by young people in the digital field. At the end of the meeting,



They also expressed their desire to see an active participation and involvement of youth in policy discussions and advocacy

participants called for the creation of innovation hubs for young people in ECOWAS member-states, greater investment in digital entrepreneurship as well as the initiation of grassroots actions to enhance peace and security through digital technology. They also encouraged the necessary political will by national governments for the adoption of transformative Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that can uplift the region through the creation of jobs in the critical sectors such as agriculture, security, and telecommunication.

In their 40-point declaration, the youth also positioned themselves to take utmost advantage and wisely use social media and social networks to create jobs while leveraging such platforms for the promotion of advocacy campaigns to reach a wider range of young minds. They also expressed their desire to see an active participation and involvement of youth in policy discussions and advocacy in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 and ECOWAS Vision 2050.

The challenges facing the region's youth are significant, and include limited access to quality education, high rates of unemployment, and the impact of conflicts and insecurity on their communities. To address these challenges, ECOWAS, and UNOWAS who took part in the summit as part of the framework of its mandate to promote the role of digital technology in driving economic growth, fostering peace and stability, and empowering the sub-region's youth, are taking a comprehensive and collaborative approach that combines skills development, and the creation of economic opportunities, while promoting youth participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.



Participants at the Youth Voice for Change Summit

El Hadji Malick Dieye, a young geomatics specialist at the service of sustainable development in Africa



El Hadji Malick Dieye

Geomatician,
winner of the Pale Blue Dot Challenge competition

El Hadji Malick Dieye, a 25-year-old Senegalese geomatician, is one of the winners of the Pale Blue Dot Challenge competition, which is an international competition created by NASA, the American Mission to International Organizations in Vienna, Driven Data, and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, with the aim of developing visualizations, using Earth observation data, which would help advance the sustainable development goals of zero hunger, clean water, and climate action. Portrait of a young man like no other.

El Hadji Malick would never have imagined, in his early childhood, that he would one day become a geomatician. It was one day, after a year lost at the University of Saint-Louis due to repetitive strikes, at the turn of a discussion with his father, himself a geomatics specialist, that he began to develop a passion for the world of geospatial technology. He then decided to follow in his father's footsteps and advice, and in 2019, he successfully passed the entrance exam to the Senegal-India Center for Entrepreneurship and Technical Development. El Hadji Malick, who

believes that he was not very brilliant during his high school years, brilliantly succeeded in his training course in geomatics, finishing with an average of 19.83 during the presentation of his integrative project on "the contribution of Geomatics to the analysis of the impact of the Bus Rapid Transit". For your information, the Bus Rapid Transit is a revolutionary project, supported by the World Bank, which aims to solve the transport problems of the inhabitants of Dakar and improve their quality of life with the introduction of a network of electric buses.

Geomatics is therefore a family affair for El Hadji Malick. With a poorly concealed passion, he tells us that geomatics was born out of the "need to represent, digitize or model a geospatial phenomenon that is visible or invisible to the naked eye." In fact, geomatics is a combination of the words "geography" and "informatics" and its main objective is "to help in decision-making, for a better living environment or to optimize well-defined resources, or to contribute to the monitoring of a particular phenomenon such as deforestation, epidemics or rural exodus,"

he says before giving us more details on the process that goes from acquisition, to the analysis and cross-referencing of the data collected, and on the geographical information system. With enthusiasm, El Hadji takes us into his universe, somewhat unknown to the public, which is nevertheless of great use to the world, particularly the African continent, especially since it is “applicable to several fields such as agriculture, natural resource monitoring, coastal surveillance, the military field, urban planning, land use planning, health.”

However, the greatest passion of this young scientist is geospatial, but unable to continue his studies in this field, due to a lack of training opportunities, he decided to refine his skills in geodesy, with a professional degree in geomeasurement and planning from the University of Thiès in partnership with the Professional School of Topographic Surveying Engineers (ESGT-CNAM). It is therefore well equipped that Mr. Dieye was able to work within several prestigious organizations such as the National Sanitation Office of Senegal (ONAS), the Directorate of Management and

Protection of Water Resources (DGPRES), the Senegalese Phosphate Society of Thiès, and the Ecological Monitoring Center.

Ambitious and confident in his abilities and skills, El Hadji Malick decided to participate in the Pale Blue Dot Challenge, a competition designed to encourage learners and practitioners of “Data Science” to use data to understand and improve the quality of life on Earth through analysis and visualization and which saw the participation of 1600 candidates spread over 140 countries around the world. “It was from Senegal, equipped with my humble know-how, a computer and an internet connection, that I participated in this competition with a group made up of an American and two Argentinian,” El Hadji tells us. Together with his team, they presented an ambitious project called “Viva Aqua”, with the aim of reducing the costs associated with hydrogeological studies by using machine learning and satellite/climate data to create an open-source tool capable of mapping essential information such as groundwater level data. “Our visual depicts the estimated groundwater level with a resolution of about 177 meters across the entire urban west coast of The Gambia, including the capital Banjul and parts of the western subdivision, which rely heavily on groundwater to access drinking water,” says El Hadji Malick. He added that “the project that we presented represents only the tip of the iceberg of the potential of our main thesis, namely the production of high-resolution, almost real-time maps of groundwater levels using a machine learning model and some processing operations with geomatics tools.” This project earned them to be among the five winners and to have the privilege of participating, very soon, in a 10-day space study program in the United States, especially in the laboratories

of NASA and United States Space and Rocket Center (USSRC).



Our visual depicts the estimated groundwater level with a resolution of about 177 meters across the entire urban west coast of The Gambia, including the capital Banjul and parts of the western subdivision, which rely heavily on groundwater to access drinking water

While acknowledging that this project could greatly contribute to advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 which aims for universal and equitable access to safe drinking water, by “helping to identify suitable locations for boreholes, addressing the scarcity of clean water and effectively monitoring groundwater,” El Hadji Malick argues that “it could also contribute to achieving SDG 2 for Zero Hunger, because of the role groundwater plays in sustaining agriculture and food production, thereby alleviating hunger,” and also SDG 13 on climate action. Indeed, this project would “provide the necessary tools to promote the sustainable management of water resources and strengthen global resilience to climate change.”

In the meantime, the young El Hadji Malick is optimistic for the future. He wishes to further develop the tool he



It was from Senegal, equipped with my humble know-how, a computer and an internet connection, that I participated in this competition with a group made up of an American and two Argentinian

set up with his comrades during this prestigious competition to contribute to better management of natural resources in the Sahel and around the world. But above all, he wants to deepen his knowledge. "My first goal is to find better opportunities to learn about the latest geospatial technologies at the world's leading universities,"

he says. And, for his native Senegal, he dreams of "contributing to finding solutions for sustainable development, particularly on issues related to the management of natural resources."

Speaking of African youth and especially those of the sub-region and the Sahel, he encourages them to

intervene more on the international scene and to believe in their potential. "Don't be intimidated by the evolution of technology, dive into the world of science and above all invest in your personal development, because it is the keystone that will open the doors to success," he advises.



El hadi Malick Dieye taking measurements in the field