

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 18 May 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to an exchange of letters between my predecessor and the President of the Security Council in October 2004 (S/2004/797 and S/2004/858) relating to the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) for three years, from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007, subject to a midterm review in July 2006.

In this connection, I attach hereto a report prepared by an independent consultant appointed by UNOWA in consultation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which reviews the activities and performance of UNOWA (see annex). The review was conducted from 22 September to 30 November 2006 and included visits by the consultant to United Nations Headquarters in New York and UNOWA premises in Dakar.

The review provides an assessment of progress made in carrying out the main functions assigned to the Office as spelled out in its mandate, contained in the annex to the Secretary-General's letter to the President of the Security Council of 14 December 2005 (S/2005/16), as well as additional tasks the Council requested the Office to carry out. The review also reflects feedback from the Economic Community of West African States and several other key international partners of the West African subregion, including the various United Nations entities with regional offices in West Africa, on the work of UNOWA. The Office, headed by Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, my Special Representative, has enjoyed the full cooperation of the host Government (Senegal) in carrying out its mandate.

I wish to inform the members of the Security Council that the substantive conceptual concerns raised by the consultant regarding the enhancement of synergies and complementarities, especially with respect to the mandates of the Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA, are being addressed with a view to maximizing the collective contribution of the Organization to the improvement of conditions in West Africa, particularly in the area of peace and security.

I should be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Ban Ki-moon**



Annex

Independent review of the United Nations Office for West Africa

The concept of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the surrounding reality

1. The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA),¹ which is also the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa (UNOWA), was established in Dakar for a three-year period pursuant to the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa, conducted from 6 to 27 March 2001, that “a mechanism for systematic and regular consultations among entities of the United Nations system for defining and harmonizing national and subregional policies and strategies should be established” (S/2001/434, sect. IV.B) and the subsequent exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2001/1128 and S/2001/1129).

2. The present independent midterm review² was envisaged in the Secretary-General’s letter S/2004/797, in which the Security Council was requested to extend the mandate of UNOWA to the end of 2007. The terms of reference of the review ask that it:

- (a) Identify results and progress made;
- (b) Explore the strengths and constraints of UNOWA and the risks and opportunities it faces;
- (c) Highlight good practices and lessons learned;
- (d) Offer recommendations for future policy and practice.

3. The overall rationale for the establishment of UNOWA is peace and security in West Africa. The area has seen much conflict over the last 20 years, and many sources of conflict remain. UNOWA was intended to take a subregional approach to the issues and causes of conflict that transcend the problems facing individual States and societies and to draw on, and involve, all the relevant capacities of the United Nations system in the area.

4. The United Nations has several special political missions and peacekeeping missions in the subregion,³ each dealing with the problems of a specific country. Many such problems extend across borders, and conflict in one country can breed turmoil in others. UNOWA has a mandate to address these issues from a subregional point of view. In doing so, it has added a new vantage point from which to address political issues and causes of conflict.

¹ UNOWA was established as a Department of Political Affairs Office away from United Nations Headquarters and was the first Department of Political Affairs experience of a decentralized regional political office. Though financed through the assessed budget for special political missions, UNOWA is not a typical special political mission. For the mandate of UNOWA see S/2005/16.

² The review took place from 22 September to 30 November 2006, principally in New York and Dakar, with short visits to Guinea and Ghana. For the main achievements of UNOWA identified in a previous internal review by UNOWA staff, see S/2004/797, annex, para. 52.

³ In Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Additionality of the Office

5. All over the world the United Nations works to prevent conflict and build peace. It does so principally at two levels, global and country: at the country level through its country teams, or in some cases special political and peacekeeping missions, and globally from United Nations Headquarters through the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the new Peacebuilding Commission, all located in New York.

6. UNOWA adds a new and interesting dimension as a decentralized capacity located in the subregion. Each United Nations country team and/or special mission may face a wide range of issues and problems that intersect with, and are relevant to, conflict prevention and the promotion of peace. Regardless of how senior and astute their leadership may be, the teams and missions face limitations in terms of the issues they can address within a country and the strength of the positions they can take while retaining a working relationship with the Government concerned and other relevant parties. Yet the issues with which they are wrestling, while very significant locally, may not be sufficiently important globally to merit the attention, let alone the intervention, of the United Nations departments in New York concerned with conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Thus, there has been a gap where United Nations country-level capacity to respond ends and before attention and intervention by United Nations Headquarters are practical. UNOWA potentially contributes to filling this gap in West Africa.

7. The idea that United Nations country teams⁴ could now have access to the resources of a subregional facility such as UNOWA to address the increasing political and conflict-related parts of their work is innovative and attractive. There are considerable advantages, both for country teams or special missions and for the United Nations Secretariat, in having the option to call on a political and intellectual resource that, while located outside the country, is still geographically proximate, that knows the country and the subregion well and whose good-offices role has a chance to succeed. It gives both the team or special mission and United Nations Headquarters access to additional wisdom and advice. It also provides a sounding board to check ideas and proposed initiatives. This resource may be called on to intervene in instances in which embroiling the local United Nations presence deeply in local political conflict, with the risks that such involvement entails,⁵ would be unproductive.

8. The use of Special Representatives by Secretaries-General to address conflict is almost as old as the United Nations itself. However, as of September 2006, UNOWA was the only subregional unit with a conflict-prevention and peacebuilding mandate that was up and running.⁶ The Office is therefore an experiment that may add significantly to the means that the United Nations Secretariat and the international community can bring to bear on issues of conflict prevention and

⁴ Particularly if constituted as recommended by the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence.

⁵ These issues are explored in somewhat greater depth in the recent United Nations Institute for Training and Research publication *On Being a Special Representative of the Secretary-General*.

⁶ Terms of reference for an analogous unit for East Asia, to be based in Singapore, have been prepared, and the review team understands that the Department of Political Affairs plans to proceed to establish it soon. There has been consideration of a facility for the Central Africa/Great Lakes region.

peacebuilding. Such an experiment merits attention and analysis to see what lessons can be drawn from it. This has not happened so far, and there is no indication that either the Department of Political Affairs, upon which UNOWA depends substantively, or the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which administers it, have given much thought to that need.

9. The Department of Political Affairs has a Planning Unit. However, the leadership of that Unit has acknowledged that its focus to date has been on establishing the mediation support function with which it is charged. Thus, less attention has been available to address questions of forward planning and drawing on the lessons of the past. Unlike the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs has no formal lesson-learning mechanism. Given the delicate nature of its responsibilities, this may be appropriate. But the apparent absence of any method for collecting and analysing information about experience in the field, recording lessons learned and then diffusing that learning with appropriate discretion within the Department⁷ is noteworthy, and places an undesirable limitation on the utility a subregional facility such as UNOWA can offer.

10. The very notion of a decentralized capacity such as UNOWA presupposes certain centralized functions that work well. Remembering, and being able to have easy access to and learn from, both the analyses made of past situations and the approaches that the United Nations and the international community took to them, would appear to be one of those functions. However, on the basis of the limited view of the workings of the Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA offered by the present review, it appears that more work is needed in both, in order for them to be able to use monitoring or evaluation activities as tools to help improve performance. If this preliminary impression turns out to be accurate, under more serious and prolonged scrutiny it may merit action by both the Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA, with support from the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

Reasonable expectations

11. It was asked that the present review address the choice of strategic priorities by UNOWA and the interaction between the activities it chose to implement and the strategy it chose to follow. It is too early to make a definitive statement on that question for several reasons. Firstly, any new departure such as UNOWA is by its nature experimental, and because it operates in the sphere of political affairs and conflict prevention, its strategy has to be flexible enough to respond to emerging circumstances. Secondly, any office that has to exercise a good-offices function needs to be opportunistic, as political problems arise and conflicts may become imminent because of forces over which it has little influence. Indeed, part of the point of having such an office is its ability to respond quickly and sensitively to unforeseen situations that emerge suddenly.

12. However, the most important reason why it is too early is that reasonable expectations for UNOWA have not yet been laid out. Headquarters departments concerned and interested Member States may wish to contribute to a refinement of

⁷ Also for disseminating those lessons appropriately throughout the United Nations system and to the international community.

the mandate that does so for future phases of its existence. This could be part of an overall clarification of reasonable expectations for all United Nations special political and good-offices missions and of conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the global, subregional and national levels. Such a clarification could be a logical consequence of the recent Office of Internal Oversight Services report on the audit of the management of special political missions by the Department of Political Affairs.⁸

13. What should have been done for UNOWA, but has not been done, was to monitor the experiment using a few simple indicators. Such indicators do not have to be measurable.⁹ If measurement is possible (and cost-effective) it should, of course, be used. But it is misleading to pretend to measure what cannot be measured,¹⁰ particularly when dealing with issues as important as conflict prevention and peacebuilding. What is needed now is for seasoned practitioners of conflict prevention to consult together and suggest some basic qualitative and/or experience-based indicators for monitoring the overall performance of UNOWA.

Strategic focus within the mandate of the Office

14. UNOWA has implemented its mandate of enhancing the contribution of the United Nations to the achievement of peace and security priorities in West Africa by carrying out the five functions assigned to it under that mandate. However, it was asked that the review also consider how UNOWA has gone about defining the strategic priorities that guide its work, whether it has effectively identified the niche of comparative advantage of and within the United Nations and what the key driving forces have been for this process of strategic planning. It is not clear that this is the most appropriate way to address the issue at this stage.

15. Strategic planning has declined from the status it acquired in the mid-1960s, because it is not the same as strategic thinking. Planning is about analysis, breaking a goal down into steps, formalizing those steps and articulating the expected consequences. Strategic thinking is about synthesis. It involves intuition and creativity. The outcome of strategic thinking is an integrated perspective, a not-too-precisely articulated vision of direction that must be free to appear at any time and at any place in the Organization.¹¹ While the role of strategic planning in the work of UNOWA is basically unclear as yet, and perhaps not really what the situation requires, there is evidence of strategic thinking.

16. Guidance from and interaction with the Secretary-General's office appear to have been significant factors in determining where the good-offices work of UNOWA is to be directed. That is as it should be. Strategic thinking is apparent in the choice of the substantive studies undertaken and how they have been used. Following the visit of the Security Council to West Africa and its recommendation

⁸ A/61/357.

⁹ See E/AC.51/2006/4, para. 66.

¹⁰ "The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is okay as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be measured or give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't very important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide" (Daniel Yankelovich).

¹¹ See *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, Henry Mintzberg, Free Press, 1994.

that UNOWA report on cross-border issues, UNOWA produced a report, in consultation with United Nations regional presences and peacekeeping entities in the region, and a matrix that indicates which agency or partner is to take action. This was followed by work aimed at addressing some of the specific issues raised, among them disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and youth unemployment.

17. The report on youth unemployment¹² addresses issues such as transforming the business environment through greater transparency, vocational training for the maintenance of electronic products, including mobile phones, and the importance of apprenticeship schemes. It has been coupled with and followed up by advocacy work, the raising of resources from interested donors and collaboration with the Youth Employment Network, a joint secretariat in Geneva set up following the Millennium Summit by the International Labour Organization, the United Nations and the World Bank. UNOWA appears to be patiently but persistently inserting the issue of youth unemployment as a conflict-promoting factor into the agenda of different players in the region and in that way encouraging a slow harmonization of the efforts of Governments, civil society and the international community, including United Nations country teams.¹³ As part of its evolving strategy, UNOWA is also conducting a study on the relationship between fast urbanization and security in the region. It is too early to tell what that will yield, but it appears to be a sunrise rather than a sunset issue, affecting the potential for conflict in West Africa.

18. The studies appear to have begun to focus the minds and therefore the agendas of allies within the United Nations system, Governments in the region, civil society and the international community, including some major non-governmental organizations. The studies do not necessarily represent fundamentally new departures in research in these areas. If they did, they would risk duplicating the efforts of capacities already well established in the United Nations system. They are novel and important because they are advocacy analysis: conscious experiments, using analysis to try to harmonize the approaches of different partners and to contribute to the subregional agenda for conflict prevention.

19. UNOWA asserts that it is identifying emerging issues relevant to prevention of conflict, increasing attention to specific problems and addressing issues in an action-oriented manner. It claims that it has achieved those results by enhancing coordination and information-sharing, and most of all by promoting an integrated subregional approach. UNOWA does indeed appear to be acquiring and exercising at least some of the competencies needed to respond to current and evolving challenges related to crisis prevention and recovery.

20. To date, the good-offices role has been very successful, according to all signals received in the context of this review. However, the performance of the Office has

¹² Available on the UNOWA website (<http://www.un.org/unowa/unowa/studies/yunemp-v2-en.pdf>).

¹³ Using bilateral donor resources, UNOWA has enabled the Youth Employment Network to assign a long-term specialist in youth unemployment to UNOWA to follow up its efforts so far. This is a tribute to the success of UNOWA in inspiring confidence within the donor community, but here also lies a potential danger for the future. UNOWA is not an operational entity, nor should it try to become something for which it does not have the capacity. Part of its additionality lies in the intelligent use of advocacy analysis, its ability to raise issues and place them, in a coherent and actionable form, on the agendas of agencies that implement programmes, as well as those that think about them. There is a tension between the demands of launching issues and the temptation to go too far down the path of implementation. UNOWA needs to manage this tension carefully. Future reviews of UNOWA need to examine this wisely.

been hampered by sub-optimal interactions with, and support from, United Nations Headquarters. This may explain the apparent lack of an overall workplan and an unclear sense among some staff of what is expected of them and their Office. Part of the problem is the start-up pains of a new initiative, part, long overdue for solution, is managerial,¹⁴ and part stems from the lack of overall clarity as to what to expect of such a new departure.

21. As to the principal areas recommended for UNOWA to focus on for the next three to five years, the first requirement is to define clearly the minimal core of competencies that a facility with a subregional vocation has to have in order to achieve an acceptable level of performance. Currently, UNOWA has within it, beyond its ability to carry out the good-offices role, some capacity for political analysis and for gender and human rights, and associated with it, but unfortunately not located within it, for humanitarian affairs. It also has military and security affairs capacity. This may be an appropriate mix going forward, and, a priori, it is plausible, but a hard, searching look is needed to see whether it is the optimal mix for an innovative initiative and how to weld that mix into a cohesive and cost-effective whole.

22. The current staff of UNOWA appear to have been so deeply engaged in their many demanding tasks that they have not been required to reflect much on these issues. They should suggest, in the light of their experience so far, a minimal critical mass of essential competencies¹⁵ with which UNOWA should be endowed, along with its good-offices and Special Representative function. They and other relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to complete this process in the near future, and certainly before a new submission is made to the Security Council for a renewal of the UNOWA mandate.

23. The next focus area should be the drawing up, and the use as a living management tool, of an overall Office workplan. When asked about this, Office staff responded that they have individual workplans, which is correct, and that the budget document provided an overall framework for their work.¹⁶ Such a document does indeed exist, and it contains both goals and indicators of accomplishment. However, its scope is for one year, and it does not contain a long- or even medium-term vision of conflict prevention and peacebuilding for West Africa. Such a vision would draw together the various components of UNOWA work, tying them to indicators that are measurable, or at least observable to informed observers. Progress towards the achievement of those indicators would guide the daily, weekly and monthly work of the various individual workplans and parts of the Office.

24. The budget document, in line with recommendations of past Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluations of peacekeeping missions, includes an exit strategy for the Office. For special political and peacekeeping missions in individual

¹⁴ A Director was appointed from, and paid for by, the United Nations Development Programme to run the Office but left in April 2006, when resources ran out. A post was then added to the UNOWA budget but has not yet been filled.

¹⁵ Currently there are four: political analysis, humanitarian affairs, human rights/gender and military and security matters.

¹⁶ They also note that one of the advantages of UNOWA is that while indeed each staff member is the focal point in charge of specific issues, they all work together, and consultations and exchanges are a part of daily business. This allows a continued assessment of situations and strategies with a view to long-term peace and security.

countries, consideration of such a strategy is appropriate. However, UNOWA, facing a larger subregional problematic, should plan and operate with an awareness of consequences over a longer time frame and a wider geographical and political scope. Its performance should be assessed in that context. In such circumstances, stressing the importance of an exit strategy appears to be premature.

25. Many managerial lacunae and the handicaps emerging from the lack of an overall Office workplan could be redressed if the post of Deputy Director were filled. Previously the post was provided and paid for by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was occupied by a senior individual until April 2006. Since then, UNDP resources have not been available, so a post for a Deputy Director has been included in the Office budget, but it is still vacant. The review team was advised informally that a qualified individual has been identified within the United Nations Secretariat but has not been reassigned, allegedly because of the difference in contractual status enjoyed by Headquarters and UNOWA staff. Apparently, UNOWA staff are limited to contracts as staff of UNOWA only, and therefore cannot move easily to other posts within the United Nations Secretariat.

26. If this is what is holding up filling that post, it appears to be an instance of bureaucratic procedure triumphing over serious substantive need. That need is, firstly, to provide an experienced and tough-minded manager capable of ensuring that the various parts of UNOWA work smoothly and synergistically, taking the burden of the day-to-day running of the Office off the shoulders of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose good offices and diplomatic skills have been, and likely will be, very much in demand, and, secondly, to associate with that manager a cadre of experienced staff who have reasonable and normal career prospects within the United Nations, in departments and assignments that would benefit from the very useful exposure and experience they would acquire while working with UNOWA. Assigning some Department of Political Affairs staff to work in the Office would appear to be a helpful way of providing them with essential field experience.

27. As to whether there are specific additional types of activities or interventions in which UNOWA should engage, it is perhaps too early to add them to the current mandate and the way that it has been interpreted. For example, the production of the studies that UNOWA has already undertaken is an innovative way of combining analysis and advocacy. The study papers have been or are being shared with an array of relevant agencies and entities, both national and subregional, and they contribute to the agendas of meetings relating to conflict prevention and peacebuilding attended by relevant actors. In this way, the issue of youth unemployment as a conflict-promoting factor appears to be gaining traction.

Results and results focus

28. Some positive results at the country, regional and global levels to which UNOWA has contributed include:

(a) The effective deployment of its good offices, as attested to by numerous privileged and well-informed observers within and outside the United Nations system;

(b) Harmonizing the work of the various special political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion, both at the level of Special Representatives and at the level of the military advisers for such missions;

(c) Advocacy analysis of youth unemployment, easy availability of small arms, cross-border problems and associated security and developmental problems of frontier areas, and peaceful and constitutional transfers of power;

(d) The work of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which is seen to have made a significant contribution to resolving the boundary issues between the two countries.

29. The factors contributing to these positive results include the good-offices capacity, which appears to have been deployed wisely in close contact with the Office of the Secretary-General and which is widely appreciated. In addition, the staff of UNOWA appear to be dedicated to their tasks and to the principles of United Nations service, so they work very hard, mitigating if not entirely eliminating the managerial lacunae referred to above. Furthermore, the Office is quite small, which encourages an awareness in all staff of current demands and allows a certain nimbleness in its ability to respond.

30. The Office has had a useful harmonizing effect within the United Nations system, working with a delicate touch to provide a regular forum and meeting ground for the special political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion to discuss issues that go beyond borders and problems of common concern in the management of such missions, including their military components.

31. UNOWA has officially issued its study on the peaceful alternation of power.¹⁷ Raising this issue dovetails neatly with the discussion in a joint Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)/UNOWA policy seminar on the evolving security architecture in West Africa, held on 30 and 31 October 2006 in Accra. Here is one area where UNOWA may wish to build on its existing work and develop the role of elder statesmen in conjunction with, and in support of, the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

32. The Office notes that, taking into account its mandate, it has enhanced linkages with United Nations entities and partners promoting the subregional approach and facilitating coordination and exchange of information, holding regular meetings with (a) Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, (b) Force Commanders, (c) the Inter-Mission Cooperation Working Group, (d) heads of the human rights components of United Nations missions and (e) United Nations regional presences in Dakar (the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Food Programme (WFP), etc.). During the meetings, issues with subregional impact have been discussed. In addition, it has carried out good offices and special assignments in countries as needed, and provided Headquarters with first-hand, well-informed background information on political and security-related developments in the subregion.

33. One factor worthy of attention in the context of learning lessons from its experience is its collocation with the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission. Part of

¹⁷ *Life after State House: Addressing Unconstitutional Changes in West Africa*, UNOWA issues paper, Dakar, March 2006.

the success of UNOWA may have come about because of this association and integration with the work of the Mixed Commission. It may be that the close association of the immediate tasks of a special political and conflict-prevention mission, with a parallel capacity for reflection on and analysis of the conflict-prevention experience that has a much longer perspective, creates some positive synergy. The Mixed Commission is seen as having contributed significantly to the resolution of the boundary dispute between the two countries, notably over the Bakassi peninsula. The present review is limited to the work of UNOWA, but it is apparent that there has been considerable interaction between the staff of the two offices to the benefit of both. This needs to be explored further and monitored to see if there are lessons for future initiatives of this nature.¹⁸

34. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs maintains a separate office in Dakar, linked with but not integral to UNOWA. Initially they were collocated, but when the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs office grew, the Humanitarian Adviser had to find new premises. The Regional Director remains the adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on humanitarian issues. Both UNOWA and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs maintained that the separation was not detrimental to either their collaboration or their effectiveness. They have not as yet offered any significant evidence supporting their positions on this issue. This review team is not convinced that separate facilities are the most cost-effective configuration.

35. Past experience demonstrates a tendency for new capacities of the United Nations system to seek autonomy for themselves once they achieve sufficient critical mass. Thus, the question is whether, when budgetary resources are sufficient to support the existence of separate offices for gender, human rights, children in conflict or environment and conflict, separate offices should indeed be created, and whether this would lead to a more coherent and effective subregional approach. It seems doubtful, especially when a former leader of ECOWAS¹⁹ stressed forcefully to the review team at the Accra seminar²⁰ that the original impetus for approaching the Secretary-General to create UNOWA had been a powerful desire for the United Nations system to work in a coherent fashion to address the complex problems of the region, something that had not yet been attained.

36. The Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNOWA should come to a common accord on, and approach to, this issue. The recent report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence, while aimed at country-level operations, would appear to have at least some relevance in both its analysis and its recommendations as regards subregional interventions.

¹⁸ After an International Court of Justice ruling, the two parties were encouraged by the Secretary-General to set up a mixed commission, chaired and serviced by the United Nations, in order to implement the ruling (i.e., withdrawal of troops) and also confidence-building measures. This was seen by some as a new paradigm for low-cost and effective conflict resolution. This example has not yet been followed elsewhere in the world. But there was innovation not only in the concept behind it, but also in one key area of implementation: the use of civilian monitors (at a fraction of the cost of United Nations military observers) to monitor the withdrawal. This appears to be a key development, one that could well be emulated elsewhere.

¹⁹ Now the Prime Minister of Guinea.

²⁰ See box entitled "Meetings".

37. Some areas where UNOWA has not made much of an impact are (a) children affected by war, an issue addressed in the original Security Council report but not extensively by UNOWA,²¹ and (b) the effect of environment and resource-management issues on conflict prevention. UNOWA does not have substantive capacity in either area, and the staff appear to have been more than fully occupied with the tasks they already had, but, lacking that reflection called for in paragraph 22 above on what essential competencies UNOWA should have, it is reasonable to ask whether these areas are not aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding that are as important as the ones that were actually chosen.

38. This is not a criticism of the choices that the UNOWA leadership has actually made; they are plausible and quite consistent with the mandate. Furthermore, an intelligent opportunism in the choice of problems addressed is a useful, perhaps essential, characteristic for an innovative initiative. However, the fact that the issue can be raised reinforces the case for serious examination by relevant stakeholders as to the most important priorities in the subregion and how they are evolving. It also implies that a more serious job of learning from this experiment should have been undertaken by the Office and by the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Given the staffing shortage under which UNOWA has laboured, that is not a very telling critique of them, but it is something that could be usefully addressed by all three of them going forward.

Impact at the regional level

39. One question in considering the subregional impact of UNOWA is whether its support is reaching national and regional counterparts (intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental) and whether its existing structures and procedures are optimally geared to meeting their needs. The principal regional counterparts are ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

40. There is already collaboration between UNOWA and ECOWAS. Another major player in this partnership is the European Union, which has been enthusiastic both about an enhanced role for ECOWAS in regional peacekeeping and about UNOWA support for strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS to fulfil that role. There are regular meetings at the ministerial level of the European Union/ECOWAS/UNOWA “troika”. UNOWA was a participant in a joint European Union/United Nations assessment mission of ECOWAS capacities and needs in the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. That assessment mission was carried out pursuant to the recommendation of the Security Council mission to West Africa, in July 2003, that the international community give concrete expression to the repeated call for increased international support for the role of ECOWAS and that UNOWA undertake a comprehensive study of ways in which the international community can increase its cooperation with, and assist in strengthening, ECOWAS capacity.

41. This is a positive evolution, as there was a lack of clarity at the outset regarding the respective roles of the Department of Political Affairs in New York,

²¹ To be fair, child trafficking was one of the subjects addressed at the Sikasso meeting (on common problems of border areas) in 2005 jointly organized by UNOWA, the Club du Sahel and ECOWAS. Also, UNOWA representatives did raise the issue at many West Africa regional meetings held by UNICEF in the last four years.

ECOWAS and UNOWA. This uncertainty has been commented on by sources within the Department of Political Affairs, within ECOWAS and from among qualified observers from United Nations organizations in the field. What appears to have been at issue was who should report to the Secretary-General on political developments in the region, and how Resident Coordinators should communicate with, and obtain political support and guidance from, the United Nations Secretariat. This uncertainty appears to have been resolved, and Resident Coordinators in the subregion have indicated that they do benefit from interaction with UNOWA, while welcoming the greater clarity emerging on the respective roles of the Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA.

42. The burgeoning collaborative programme that has been initiated between ECOWAS and UNOWA and the European Union is a testament to UNOWA efforts to establish itself as a viable political resource for its stakeholders. But it needs sufficient capacity to play its part in those partnerships, and/or it needs some supporting alliances within the United Nations system to assist in the delivery of the ECOWAS/European Union programmes. In this connection, the observation by the European Union/United Nations assessment mission that UNOWA is considering seconding a staff member to Abuja to serve as a liaison with the ECOWAS secretariat may need active follow-up.

43. It appears that the strengthening of the capacity of ECOWAS requires continued support. While there are ample resources available both from the States concerned and from the international community, notably the European Union, some programmes have a way to go before full implementation and the creation of sustainable capacities are achieved. The UNDP approach to managing cost-sharing contributions to programmes it implements in Latin America may have some relevance to ECOWAS/UNOWA collaboration. Current inflexibility in the United Nations Secretariat's financial and administrative procedures for programmes in the field and for trust fund activities would probably prevent the direct involvement of UNOWA. Hence the need for UNOWA to establish alliances within the United Nations system, possibly with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) or UNDP itself, so that agencies can help implement the externally funded contributions to strengthening ECOWAS capacity and carrying out its programmes.

44. UNOWA relations with the Mano River Union and WAEMU were less visible to the review team, although in November 2006 UNOWA helped to finance and organize a major subregional meeting in Conakry on peace, security and confidence-building measures in the Mano River area, along with the Mano River Union, the Department of Political Affairs and the UNDP/Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. Overall, it is difficult at this stage to discern the impact on subregional organizations other than ECOWAS. However, ECOWAS appears to be the key, and UNOWA has been well advised to concentrate its attention there.

45. It is premature to say whether the existing structures and procedures are optimally geared to meeting the needs of UNOWA partners, and to draw much in the way of conclusions on lessons that can be learned from UNOWA support, in terms of guidance, timely policy advice and other appropriate support relevant to this practice area. One cannot say even tentatively whether the structure is optimal until it has been properly staffed and the serious reflection called for in paragraph 22 above, on the minimal core competencies that such a facility needs, has been carried

out. The current staff of the Office is the group least ill-equipped to carry out that task, notwithstanding their workload, which is already heavy.

46. As to UNOWA effectiveness in mainstreaming concerns of the United Nations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the country and regional levels, it is difficult to say, beyond remarking that the Office appears to have done a good job in advancing the goals of peace and security in West Africa, what the principal relevant concerns of those two Departments are. Any other major concerns should have been laid out in the overall Office workplan, but since none exists beyond its mandate, which it is fulfilling, judgement on this score has to be tentative.

Inter-agency coordination

47. Has UNOWA enhanced the harmonization of activities of various United Nations missions and other regional entities, and has it favoured information-sharing? The simple answer to that complex question is yes. It organized regular meetings for the special political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion to discuss issues that go beyond borders and problems of common concern in the management of such missions, including their military components. To date, there have been eight such meetings.

Meetings

The work of the review was helped by the opportunity to attend two significant meetings that UNOWA, along with other partners, organized and conducted.

The first, on the theme “Consolidating peace in West Africa: regional challenges, transborder threats and the evolving international role”, was held in Senegal on 20 and 21 October 2006 at the Gorée Institute. It addressed the topics “Responses to regional challenges and transborder issues: governance and security”, “Sanctions and embargoes: (un-) intended national and regional consequences”, “National processes in peace consolidation and their regional implications: transitional justice” and “Fine-tuning a regional approach or a new toolbox?”

The second, on the theme “Evolving security architecture of ECOWAS: looking back to the future”, was held on 30 and 31 October 2006 in Accra, and included presentations and discussions on the topics “West Africa’s evolving security architecture”, “Mediation: the Council of Elders”, “United Nations/ECOWAS collaboration in peacekeeping/peacebuilding”, “ECOWAS and the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission”, “The ECOWAS early warning system”, “Elections and democratic transitions”, “HIV/AIDS and Security” and the UNOWA report *Life after State House: Addressing Unconstitutional Changes in West Africa*.

The first was attended by ambassadors of major nations and representatives of major international non-governmental organizations dealing with conflict issues, regional organizations and international financial institutions. Most of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and one United Nations Resident Coordinator from the subregion also attended. Thus, there was a good mix of thoughtful practitioners and practical thinkers. There were recurrent references to various issues regarding which UNOWA has been an advocate, in discussions on such diverse topics as differentiating between effective and ineffective sanctions and the implications of the growing involvement of emerging economies in the subregion.

The second was attended by staff of ECOWAS, a number of senior thinkers from the subregion and representatives of the security and private sectors. There were serious discussions of pressing security issues facing the subregion and the practical aspects of democratic transfer of power, into all of which UNOWA discreetly injected its thinking, as well as presenting, at the end of the meeting, its paper *Life after State House*. Both meetings lent plausibility to the view that UNOWA is affecting the agenda and actions of key players both from within and from outside the region.

48. Most United Nations participants interviewed indicated that they appreciated the exchange of information in an informal setting and the chance to discuss problems in an informal context and to seek and exchange advice. Most also appreciated the extra reach that a geographically proximate but non-resident United Nations good-offices facility could offer them. Such a facility should also, in theory, be available to non-United Nations entities in the region, but it is not clear that they would yet be willing to seek its help, however sensible and useful that might be for the subregion.

49. Coordination, as a general rule, is difficult, if not impossible, for those who have no hierarchical authority over, or benefits and resources to offer, those they are asked to coordinate. Consequently, the practical operationalization of the concept of coordination has in recent times morphed into harmonization, a much more subtle and demanding task, the effects of which are harder to discern.

50. The UNOWA leadership appears to have exercised a harmonizing effect within and beyond the United Nations system, working with a delicate touch to provide a regular forum or meeting ground. In formal terms, this harmonization has not gone beyond the United Nations system, but there is no indication that other external partners of Governments in the region, such as the European Union, the international financial institutions or the major international non-governmental organizations interested in conflict issues are yet ready to be harmonized. However, they do participate in various meetings or activities in which UNOWA has a role and so appear to be open to being influenced by subtle advocacy.

51. The UNOWA tactic of organizing or co-financing regular meetings of concern to such players is an effective way of putting issues on the agenda and thus inducing and promoting harmonization. UNOWA has involved other influential groups, such

as the Development Assistance Committee/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-based Club du Sahel, to put youth unemployment in the region and the problems of border areas, among other topics, onto many agendas. The constraints to more effective inter-agency coordination and planning have been addressed by the recent report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. In its own domain, UNOWA appears to be doing quite a good job on this score without fanfare.

Cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and human rights

52. The terms of reference ask that the present review determine whether UNOWA has been able to mainstream gender across its various service lines. But it is unclear how much operational sense mainstreaming gender has in the areas in which it operates, especially as its service lines have yet to be established.²² It certainly does have capacity in respect of gender, and it has worked actively with women's groups in the region in the pursuit of peace, not least with the Mano River Women's Peace Network. But the role and core competencies of the Office need to be firmly established before one can sensibly assess performance in mainstreaming. The gender-related recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence are relevant here.²³

53. As for human rights work, the review team was advised that, as part of its harmonization mandate, UNOWA has met regularly with the heads of the human rights components of United Nations missions. The human rights staff also report regularly to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and through him to OHCHR on human rights developments in the region. The UNOWA issue papers, such as those on youth unemployment and the problems of border areas, all make reference to both gender and human rights. In the work on border areas, there has been an interesting exploration from the perspective of human rights of the difficulty those dwelling in such areas face in obtaining identity cards, which would facilitate legal travel across frontiers. They have also actively drawn attention to human trafficking issues, particularly in respect of children.

54. However, there may be more work to do to translate these concerns into practical measures for a subregional conflict-prevention/peacebuilding facility, and to show how the useful advocacy analysis for youth unemployment, security sector reform and the problems of border areas can be expanded to include discussion and consideration by the communities concerned of tangible measures to protect the human rights of the communities involved and to advance the opportunities and security of women therein. One or two pieces of advocacy analysis in this vein analogous to that undertaken for youth employment might help translate these overarching concerns into actionable components of Government and agency programmes in the area.

55. Security concerns and military matters were not touched upon in the terms of reference of the review, nor are they specifically mentioned in the mandate, but appear to be a cross-cutting issue of consequence. The review team endeavoured to

²² See paras. 21 and 22 above.

²³ See A/61/583, para. 49 and box 2.

elicit the views of the military staff of UNOWA, but specific suggestions were not forthcoming, so the following observations are tentative and made without professional backing. Military and security issues would appear to be cross-border in nature and a common feature of many countries in the subregion, so a capacity to understand and advise on both would appear to be a core competency required for UNOWA going forward. How to link them with conflict-prevention agenda-setting, including also political, human rights and humanitarian dimensions, and how to associate them all productively with parallel activities of agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, remains to be elaborated, but it is part of the hard, searching look called for above.

Human and capital resource use and future financial sustainability

56. The most consistent features of staff and personnel trends in recent years have been insufficiency and uncertainty. The review has already commented on the desirability of having qualified personnel from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and OHCHR, and the importance of keeping them on the same premises as UNOWA rather than setting up separate facilities, as has been the case for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

57. But the question should not be “What is the effectiveness of the arrangements with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and OHCHR for staff to cover humanitarian and human rights functions, and with UNDP for the post of Director of UNOWA?” but, rather, whether the skill profile and current mix of staff meet present and projected needs. In the latter formulation, the evolving needs of the subregion come first. Then the issue becomes that of how best to equip a subregional conflict-prevention and peacebuilding facility, and how the various parts of the United Nations system, in this instance the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, OHCHR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and perhaps the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, can best supply the skills that such new initiative of this kind requires.

58. It appears that donors are willing to provide extrabudgetary resources as trust funds for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A number of initiatives have been made possible, including the November meeting in Conakry dealing with peacekeeping in the Mano River area, funded by the Department of Political Affairs Trust Fund for Preventive Action. However, implementing such trust funds is difficult and labour-intensive because of the cumbersome financial and administrative procedures of the United Nations. Managerial time and effort are very scarce resources for UNOWA, so finding allies within the United Nations system, such as UNOPS, that can handle the administration of such trust fund activities that UNOWA is sponsoring and or co-financing may be an area to explore.

Other issues

59. Air transport has been posed as an issue. The review team understands that provision for air transport was made in the last budget but that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions was interested in the comments of the present review. Transport links within the subregion are not

optimal, and safety standards are not always the highest. Modern communications technology is increasingly reducing the need for staff to be physically present to perform much of the day-to-day work of the United Nations. Some of its functions, however, need the personal touch, notably diplomacy. The question would therefore appear to be whether the good-offices role can be effectively carried out without ready access to dedicated or partially dedicated transport facilities. Wars, mutinies and rebellions are costly processes, and prospects for them to occur in West Africa remain significant, so it may be prudent to lean towards generosity in considering this aspect of the current operations and future needs of UNOWA.

Some lessons

60. UNOWA is an interesting and innovative experiment. As a new facility, mandated by the Security Council to respond to subregional issues of peace and security in West Africa,²⁴ it adds, potentially at least, to the tools the international community can use to quell conflict and promote peace. It offers a new vantage point for constructive intervention by the United Nations in West Africa. Located in the subregion, it is physically near but less constrained in its actions than United Nations country teams or the several special political and peacekeeping missions in individual countries. Such an experiment should be properly resourced and managed and intelligently monitored and tested to see how well it works over an extended period. That has not been the case so far.²⁵ It should be in future.

61. When the United Nations develops an interesting idea for furthering its effectiveness in promoting peace and curtailing conflict, it should support it wholeheartedly and not permit administrative practices or debates over who has the leadership role in reporting to the Secretary-General on political developments within the subregion to get in the way of establishing and testing such an initiative.

62. Many of the skills of a successful manager in the United Nations can be learned best (perhaps only) on the job. There is an apprenticeship, albeit a sophisticated one, to be followed in learning how to build peace and prevent conflict. Opportunities to learn conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as offered in UNOWA, do not come easily to staff who serve only at United Nations Headquarters. Those working in an innovative experiment such as UNOWA should be aware of their special responsibility to record and report intelligently on what they are doing. Equally importantly, their Department of Political Affairs colleagues at Headquarters, who do not have the advantage of being on the front line of multilateral efforts to build peace, should be aware of their special responsibility to learn from and use the experience of facilities such as UNOWA.

63. Greater exchange and rotation of staff between Headquarters and the field would offer considerable benefits both to the staff concerned and to the Organization. Career mobility has been a sine qua non for advancement in the funds and programmes and is a tried and cost-effective way of providing individuals with the skills the United Nations Secretariat requires. It would strengthen the capacity of Headquarters staff, particularly those within the Department of Political Affairs, to

²⁴ See S/2005/16.

²⁵ The initial midterm review, done internally in 2003, dealt mainly with issues of administrative support (see S/2004/797).

serve in missions and facilities such as the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and UNOWA, and vice versa.

64. The work of UNOWA appears to have been hampered by limitations on staff mobility and the contractual choices available to its staff. If the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Secretariat are to develop a more effective conflict-prevention and peacebuilding capacity, those constraints should be removed, and staff working for UNOWA should be given contracts permitting them to serve anywhere United Nations staff can serve.

65. Part of the success of UNOWA may have come about through its integration with the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, because of the association of the immediate tasks of preventive diplomacy with the setting up in the same location of a parallel capacity for reflection on and analysis of the conflict-prevention experience. This lesson needs to be explored further to see if it is a guide for future initiatives of this nature.

Some findings and recommendations	Suggested actors
Results and progress made	
<p>1. UNOWA is an experiment that may represent a significant addition to the United Nations toolkit for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. To date there has been a gap between the country-level capacity of the United Nations to respond to threats to peace and its global capacity to do so. A subregional facility such as UNOWA potentially contributes to filling that gap.</p>	
<p>2. Results have been more than satisfactory, given the relatively short life of an Office that was given an innovative role. Its impact, in terms of processes of conflict prevention and peacebuilding set in motion by UNOWA, remains to be seen.</p>	Office of Internal Oversight Services
Strengths and constraints	
<p>3. According to all signals received, the good-offices role appears to be successful and much appreciated by key stakeholders, both in the subregion and outside it.</p>	
<p>4. UNOWA lacks an overall workplan. One should be formulated soon. The Office lacks a Deputy Director to manage it. One should be fielded very soon. Its work appears to have been hampered by limitations on the contractual choices available to its staff.</p>	UNOWA, Department of Political Affairs, Personnel Management and Support Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Office of Human Resources Management

Some findings and recommendations	Suggested actors
Good practices and lessons learned	
<p>5. UNOWA studies are novel and appear to resonate within the subregion as advocacy analysis; conscious experiments using such analysis to try to harmonize the approaches of different partners and to contribute to the subregional agenda for conflict prevention.</p>	
Recommendations for future policy and practice	
<p>6. As an experiment, UNOWA should be properly resourced and staffed, managed and monitored intelligently and tested to see if and how it works over an extended period.</p>	<p>UNOWA, Department of Political Affairs, Personnel Management and Support Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Office of Internal Oversight Services</p>
<p>7. The need for the good-offices role of UNOWA is clear. What else is needed for it to function optimally is not yet clear. Thus, the current UNOWA team should suggest a minimum critical mass of the essential competencies with which a subregional facility for conflict prevention and peacebuilding should be endowed. The Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should also contribute to this process. The Security Council may wish to seek clarity on this issue before renewing the mandate.</p>	<p>UNOWA, Department of Political Affairs, Personnel Management and Support Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations</p>
<p>8. UNOWA may wish to build on its work with the ECOWAS Council of Elders and develop the role of elder statesmen in the subregion in conjunction with, in support of and expanding the good-offices role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.</p>	<p>Department of Political Affairs, UNOWA</p>
<p>9. The Department of Political Affairs and UNOWA each need some feedback/lesson-learning mechanism. The form of such a mechanism does not have to parallel that of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but the purpose should be served in some appropriate way. Allocating at least 1 per cent of Department of Political Affairs and of UNOWA resources to evaluating their effectiveness and impact, and using the lessons in a systematic fashion, would be a minimal response to present needs.</p>	<p>Department of Political Affairs, UNOWA</p>

Some findings and recommendations	Suggested actors
<p>10. Rotation of staff between Headquarters and the field can help build conflict-prevention and peacebuilding capacity and is a tried, cost-effective way of providing individuals with skills the United Nations requires. It would strengthen the capacity of Headquarters staff, particularly within the Department of Political Affairs, to serve in missions and facilities such as the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and UNOWA and vice versa. Thus, it would probably help the Department of Political Affairs perform better if limitations on contractual choices available to qualified UNOWA staff were removed and they were given contracts permitting them to serve anywhere such United Nations staff can serve.</p>	<p>Department of Political Affairs, Office of Human Resources Management, Personnel Management and Support Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations</p>