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Seventy-seventh year

9012th meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kariuki	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Ms. De Souza Schmitz
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Parihar
	Ireland	Mr. Flynn
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/278)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/278)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and Ms. Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké, President of Women in Law and Development in Africa in Mali.

Mr. Wane and Ms. Samaké are joining this meeting via video-teleconference.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/278, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr. Wane: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to update the Security Council.

(spoke in French)

Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.8945), the overall situation in Mali has remained extremely worrisome. Civilians face immense suffering. There has been no significant progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Moreover, despite considerable efforts to that end, there is yet no consensus on the duration of the transition.

I would like to start with an overview of the security situation. In addition to the incidents noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/278), the month of March saw several deadly attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, in the Ménaka region and south of Gao. The clashes in the Ménaka region, which occurred 200 kilometres from the closest

positions of the Malian Defence and Security Forces and of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), caused the deaths of at least 40 civilians and the displacement of approximately 3,640 households. In response to those incidents, MINUSMA stepped up its patrols in the town of Ménaka, allowing the Malian Defence and Security Forces and signatory groups to more robustly mobilize to respond to the situation.

South of the Gao region, elements of the Islamic State continued their attacks against Tessit, including against a camp of the Malian armed forces on 21 March. On the same day, the Islamic State also attacked the commune of Talataye, causing significant population displacement and the deaths of several civilians.

In coordination with Malian armed forces, MINUSMA deployed three units of its mobile task force in the area between Ansongo, Labezanga and Tessit. From 21 March, a unit has patrolled between Tessit and the Niger border, on the west side of the Niger River; another does the same between Ansongo and Labezanga, on the east side of the river; and a third unit has been deployed to Ansongo. It is in that context that, on 22 March, a Malian armed forces helicopter taking part in a deterrence operation near Tessit opened fire near one of our patrols. Fortunately, the incident caused no casualties or injuries. An investigation is under way to clarify the circumstances of the incident. The same patrol continued to monitor the area around Tessit and, on 24 and 27 March, forced armed groups to abandon their equipment and flee the area.

In response to the attack on Talataye, the MINUSMA force redeployed a mobile task force unit from Ansongo-Labezanga to Talataye on 31 March, followed by the redeployment of another in the same area on 1 April. Those units have contributed to stabilizing the security situation.

Even if the trigger for the resumption of violence in the tri-border area seems to be linked to local trafficking and related dynamics, it should be noted that such incidents occur in the context of the withdrawal of the forces of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba. Facing less pressure, terrorist groups enjoy greater leeway, posing increased danger to both civilians and our operations.

Given such challenges, it is imperative that the level of our capabilities and troops be maintained. It is equally important that adequate responses be found

to the challenges related to our capability shortfalls, as well as to the national caveats of troop- and police-contributing countries.

(spoke in English)

As announced by the Malian authorities to the Council during its October visit, Malian forces have stepped up their counter-terrorism efforts in the centre to break the chokehold of extremist groups over large swaths of the region. While it is still too early to assess their long-term impact, those operations appear to have contributed to a decrease in armed clashes between community defence forces and terrorist groups, vehicle hijackings, abductions and attacks on people's livelihoods and local infrastructure.

Last week's offensive by the Malian armed forces against Katiba Macina elements in Moura village, south of Mopti, falls within the scope of those operations. In a communiqué issued on 1 April, the Malian armed forces asserted that they had neutralized scores of terrorist elements controlling the area. At the same time, MINUSMA also received reports of serious human rights abuses committed against large numbers of civilians during the operation. The Mission sought access to the area and was able to conduct a reconnaissance overflight on 3 April. Until now, authorization for the sending of an integrated mission has not been issued despite extensive engagement with the national authorities. While the announcement last night by the Prosecutor of the Mopti military tribunal of the opening of an investigation, including the deployment to the field of the required personnel, is a welcome initiative, it is also imperative that the Malian authorities extend the necessary cooperation for MINUSMA to have access to the site of the alleged violations, in line with its mandate.

More generally on human rights, MINUSMA has opened 17 investigations into allegations of indiscriminate attacks against civilians, extrajudicial arrests, mistreatment, forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in central Mali since the beginning of this year. We are currently finalizing an update on the human rights situation, which will cover the period from January to March of this year.

While military and security operations are an absolute necessity in combating terrorism, experience has time and again shown that such an approach alone cannot bring about long-lasting stability, especially in an environment as complex as the one prevailing in

central Mali. First, the operations need to be conducted in ways that minimize, to the full extent possible, civilian harm and uphold human rights and international humanitarian law principles. Secondly, they have to be complemented by practical and sustained steps focusing on the root causes of conflict and violence.

In that respect, the finalization by the Malian Government of its strategy for the centre and its effective implementation are a must for the stabilization of the region. In the meantime, MINUSMA continues to carry out important tasks linked to the protection of civilians, as in Ogossagou and along the Douentza-Petaka road in the central part of Mali, the protection of physical infrastructure and related livelihoods in the strategic axis linking Sévaré to Bandiagara and local reconciliation agreements. In the same vein, we recently launched a pilot project in the Douentza region to improve relations between the Malian Defence and Security Forces and the communities.

During the period under review, no tangible progress was made in the peace process, a situation compounded by the fact that the Agreement Monitoring Committee has not met since October last year, depriving the parties and their international partners alike of the much-needed platform to collectively assess the challenges at hand and seek a consensual way forward. Instead, the past three months were marked by worrisome actions and rhetoric, not in line with the spirit of the Agreement.

Furthermore, despite the efforts made, tensions remain between the Government and signatory movements over the issue of the Cadre stratégique permanent — the structure put in place by the latter with the stated aim of reconciling northern communities.

Against that backdrop, the Mission, in coordination with Algeria as the leader of the international mediation, has continued to engage the parties, encouraging them to move forward with the long-delayed high-level decision-making meeting expected to facilitate consensus on the critically important issues of global disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and institutional reforms. I note that the Government has shared with the signatory movements the draft terms of reference for the meeting.

The current status quo carries huge risks for the future of the peace agreement and deprives local populations of the peace dividends for which they are yearning, while also increasing the threats facing our

peacekeepers deployed in northern Mali, especially in locations such as Kidal, Aguelhok and Tessalit. In that context, the Council may wish to urge the parties to take advantage of the synergies that exist between the recommendations of the Assises nationales de la refondation and the peace agreement to reverse the cycle of recurring conflict in the north.

Council members will recall that the political transition in Mali was to conclude in March, in accordance with the initial 18-month timetable negotiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after the August 2020 coup d'état. The non-completion of the transition within the agreed timelines led ECOWAS to impose economic and financial sanctions last January in addition to the individual measures decided a month earlier. The impasse has unfortunately persisted, exacerbating tensions between Mali and ECOWAS and adversely impacting its relations with other international actors.

As part of the local transition follow-up committee, which includes ECOWAS, the African Union and MINUSMA, the Mission has worked to arrive at an acceptable timetable for the holding of elections. The technical discussions that took place in February and March paved the way for the return to Bamako on two occasions of the ECOWAS mediator, former President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria.

While some progress was made, with Mali requesting an additional 24 months to bring the transition to an end, that was deemed to still be too long at the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS held in Accra on 25 March. The Summit emphasized the urgency of reaching an agreement, given the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the country. It endorsed the proposal of 12 to 16 months put forward by the local follow-up committee as a basis for negotiation and mandated the mediator to return to Bamako to conclude a deal that would also ensure the gradual lifting of the sanctions levied on Mali.

No effort should be spared to achieve an agreement regarding the transition. That would make it possible not only to lift the sanctions, a critical measure in view of the prevailing humanitarian situation, but also to create a more propitious environment for the pursuit of the other processes fundamental to the country's stabilization. In the coming days, in conjunction with the other members of the local follow-up committee,

we will continue to engage with the Malian authorities and other stakeholders to help to find a solution to the impasse.

In the past 12 months, I had the privilege of crisscrossing our area of deployment. On several occasions, I travelled to the locations of Tessalit, Aguelhok and Kidal in the far north, the city of Timbuktu, as well as in Ber and Goundam, to the towns of Mopti, Dounetza, Bandiagara and Segou in central Mali and to the north-eastern part of the country, from Gao to Ansongo to Menaka. Everywhere I went, I interacted extensively with local communities and officials.

While in all those places, as well as in Bamako, there is a clear frustration at the prevailing insecurity and, understandably, criticism at the shortcomings of the actions taken over the past decade or so, what I also heard and noticed was a strong yearning for peace and better governance, which was also expressed during the Assises nationales de la refondation. Malian political stakeholders need to collectively internalize that yearning and live up to the expectations of their people.

For the sake of the Malian people, MINUSMA, which embodies the international solidarity that Mali so deserves and is entitled to in its hour of need, should also be given all the resources it requires to close the gap that continues to exist between what the Mission is mandated to do and what it can actually do.

The President: I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Samaké.

Ms. Samaké (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address the Security Council as part of this briefing on the security situation in Mali. I sincerely thank Council members for the opportunity they are giving, through me, to Malian civil society.

I am Ms. Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké. I am a lawyer by training, the President of Women in Law and Development in Africa in Mali and the former Minister for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family. The organization that I represent, Women in Law and Development in Africa in Mali, is a pan-African network for the promotion and protection of women's rights. It is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that signed a framework agreement with the Republic of Mali and brings under its umbrella 25 organizations and NGOs for the promotion and protection of women's rights. We are a member of the Gender, Climate Change

and Security Coalition. We have noted that women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, which is why we established the network, which analyses the traditional roles of women as consumers and managers of natural resources, which climate change can significantly affect. I would like to underscore that currently in Mali we have people who have been displaced as a result of climate change. This Coalition also brings together approximately 20 associations and NGOs working throughout Mali.

The briefing I am delivering at this meeting is the result of a compilation of the views and analyses of those organizations and NGOs and individuals on the ground in the north, south and centre of Mali.

What is the current context in Mali? In addition to what was said by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I will add that Mali is currently facing a multidimensional crisis, characterized by political, security, cultural, identity and institutional challenges in an unstable environment and a very difficult economic situation. Insecurity in Mali is multifaceted and involves many actors and has had a very negative impact on the population and on human rights organizations. In that connection, I would like to recall some recent political and security developments in Mali that need to be taken into account when making decisions concerning Mali.

First, the holding of the Assises nationales de la refondation and the formulation of 516 recommendations, including the extension of the transition period and the institutional and political reforms, are an expression of popular will.

Next, there is the will to change, advocated by the Malian authorities, when it comes to cooperation on defence and security, which led to a change of position vis-à-vis the international community following the authorities' decision to diversify that cooperation.

There is also the issue of the withdrawal of Operation Barkhane. This situation has led to apprehension among Western countries with regard to probable cooperation with the Wagner Group, which the Malian authorities refute.

Added to that is the failure to provide a timeline for the elections and for the transition, which has pitted Mali against its European partners, notably France, but also its African neighbours in the Economic Community of West African States.

As the Secretary-General indicated, there has also been intense fighting between the Malian armed forces and armed terrorist groups in central and northern Mali. That has been increasing recently, as underscored in the places where those conflicts took place. However, most people support the Malian armed forces in its counter-terrorism operations. And that support can be seen at all levels. The overwhelming majority of civil society supports the increased power of the Malian armed forces, but remains concerned about the breakdown of international cooperation, in particular the European and subregional cooperation, and the consequences that that breakdown could have on the civilian population.

Those facts have an impact on the work of NGOs on the ground. What difficulties are we facing? It is difficult to move around and to gain access to certain areas. It used to be possible — even during the period of insecurity — to move around with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), but restrictions have been placed on access to the logistical means of MINUSMA.

There is a limitation on certain fundamental freedoms — the freedom of expression, the freedom of movement and access to justice. In that context of insecurity, one cannot say just anything, which means that the freedom of expression is often limited. I can say that today prominent people are speaking out against the restrictions on expression in Mali.

There are few financial resources and partners. Partners basically left Mali. It is deserted. In the most remote locations, it is no longer possible to find partners to help local organizations carry out their work.

There are also a growing fundamentalist trends, which are undermining all efforts with regard to gender-related issues. There is a widening of the gender inequality gap in all areas.

Moreover, the policies and programmes that could alleviate the plight of populations, especially women and children, are not being implemented. We have in place an action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. That plan has been delayed, and few commitments have been implemented. Poverty among women, especially women in rural areas, is increasing. That context is very difficult for rural women, who find it very difficult to trade or move about and have to face sexual violence.

There are additional challenges facing Mali, including a common understanding of the mandate of MINUSMA by the people. Each time it is renewed, we believe that a communications programme on the mandate should be established so that we can reach a common understanding thereof.

Another challenge is the consensual implementation of the agreement. Women fought for the signing of a peace agreement and to create mechanisms for its implementation. In the beginning, we had noted that women were not involved in those agreement implementation mechanisms. Here I wish to congratulate MINUSMA, which provided us a great deal of support in our endeavours to ensure the involvement of women in the peace agreement implementation. Today, thanks to those efforts, nine women from civil society are members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee on the implementation of the agreement emanating from the Algiers process.

Another challenge is the lifting of sanctions. Every time the Economic Community of West African States comes to Mali for a meeting, we have hope. But every time such meetings end in failure, and those failures have a negative effect on the people in general, particularly women. As long as no such agreement has been reached, the transition will not have begun. We are awaiting with impatience and concern an agreement on the lifting of sanctions and the return of constitutional order.

Next is the issue of inclusivity with respect to governance actors. Today in Mali we have a law that states that 30 per cent of decision-making posts need to be allocated on the basis of gender. However, such inclusivity does not exist in terms of governance.

We must also deal with residual insecurity. We do not always have the same understanding of that combat against insecurity and terrorism as does MINUSMA. We who work with MINUSMA understand the position of the Blue Helmets, and we are familiar with their mandate. But for the majority of people, MINUSMA's role is to combat terrorism. I am saying that, and it can be put in quotes if so desired, but that is how most of the people understand it, as they do not grasp that MINUSMA does not have a mandate to combat terrorism.

The fight against impunity for abuses, war crimes and acts of sexual violence linked to conflict is another challenge, as well as the fight against gender inequality.

We must put to good use our human resources, meaning young people, because 60 per cent of the population of Mali are young people and have no employment prospects. Concerning Mali's natural resources, we have the sun; indeed, today it is 44 degrees in Bamako. We also have wind, water and land.

How to overcome those challenges? First, we have noted that the security context compounds inequalities and widens the gaps that must be overcome in order for women and young people to gain access to resources and governance. Civil society, in the face of those challenges, is planning to coordinate the efforts made by the Security Council and the Government of my country and promote a legal framework and resources conducive to building a more inclusive, effective, transparent, sustainable and responsible security sector that would serve the people of Mali.

Second, it is also endeavouring to strengthen gender-sensitive language as used in MINUSMA's mandate on security-sector reform, including by consulting Malian women prior to the mandate renewal, so as to ensure that their needs, perspectives and priorities are included therein. In the current mandate, the issue of gender was taken up, but no specific decision was taken to make that point more clear and specific in the mandate.

Third, we need to provide specific orientations and key actions to be undertaken by the Mission to support what the Government is doing in order to ensure more gender-sensitive security services.

Fourth, we need to strengthen women's empowerment by enabling them to overcome the political, legal and institutional obstacles that hinder their recruitment, retention and promotion in the security sector.

Fifth, the low percentage of women in the security sector affects their capacity to prevent violence, protect defenders of women's human rights and provide services. Currently, in the context of our relations with MINUSMA, with respect to tackling issues relating to gender-based violence, we note that there are few psychologists in their ranks. Few women are working in humanitarian operations within the Mission. Those women, when they are present, reassure other women that their issues can be effectively managed in the context of the services provided by MINUSMA.

Sixth, we wish climate change to be mentioned in the mandate of MINUSMA as a key element affecting

the security of the population, specifically women and children. Indeed, many intercommunal conflicts are linked to a lack of resources and to climate change. So that is a key element that impacts violence and conflict.

Seventh, effective accountability mechanisms need to be put in place in order to end impunity for all forms of violence against women and groups that are underrepresented within security institutions.

Eighth, we must transform into an opportunity potential sources of energy such as wind, the sun, water and space. I wish to underline that when I was in Tessalit, I saw solar panels in public places. At night the children would come and learn their lessons under those panels, and the men would come play pétanque. That sort of thing helps people to change their mindsets, coexist and be able to chat and relax a bit, because we know that those places can often be very hostile, especially if there is no electricity.

Ninth, we need to promote the inclusion upstream of women in the security sector and civil-society organizations in negotiations on the provisions of security arrangements and Malian peace agreements, national security policies and military expenditure. Here I underline that those women who have joined the Agreement Monitoring Committee have changed the course of discussions within that institution. So I would say that the presence of women in decision-making institutions should be viewed as an opportunity and encouraged.

Tenth, we need to undertake an assessment of the barriers that exist in the way of women's participation in the security sector, in particular in decision-making instances. I did not include figures because we must be wary of figures in Mali, as we lack statistics. Nevertheless, the presence of women in decision-making bodies truly represents an opportunity for us.

I would be happy to clarify or explain or answer questions on any of the issues I discussed.

The President: I thank Ms. Samaké for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Samaké for their briefings.

France is very concerned about the situation in Mali — the increase in violence against civilians in the centre of the country since the beginning of the year, with total impunity, and reports of human rights violations by elements of the Malian armed forces, accompanied by Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group. France, the European Union and the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) expressed their concerns in December, when the Wagner Group was deployed.

I refer in particular to the abuses that caused the deaths of hundreds of civilians in the village of Moura. France extends its condolences to the families of the victims and calls for national and international investigations to be opened rapidly. That will make it possible to prosecute the perpetrators of those acts, some of which could constitute war crimes. We take note of the opening of an investigation by the prosecutor in Mopti and look forward to the follow-up. It is essential that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) also be able to conduct its own investigation, without hindrance and with total independence, in order to establish the facts and report back to the Council. In addition, it is essential that MINUSMA use all the means at its disposal to protect civilians. We call on the Malian authorities to guarantee the Mission's freedom of movement.

The fight against terrorism can succeed only if it is supported by the people. It can never justify indiscriminate violence against civilians, which only strengthens the terrorist groups. In that respect, we note with concern the offensive carried out since the beginning of the year by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara in the tri-border area.

This deterioration in the security situation comes at a time when the war waged by Russia in Ukraine is aggravating an already critical food situation. We reaffirm our solidarity with the Malian people and those of the Sahel.

The coming months will be crucial for Mali. We call on the transitional authorities to focus on three political objectives.

The first is the implementation of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. As a member of the international mediation, we consider that this is still the appropriate response to ease tensions between the armed groups that signed the Agreement

and the authorities in Bamako in a sustainable manner. However, no progress has been made for several months. A new start is needed.

The second objective is to propose a concrete strategy to deal with the crisis in the centre and protect civilians. In that regard again, results are expected.

The third objective is the finalization of the political transition and the return to constitutional order. We hope for a rapid agreement between Mali and ECOWAS to organize elections as soon as possible. We support the efforts of ECOWAS, and we condemn the infringement of civil liberties, which serves only to further strain the political climate.

In order to achieve those three objectives, MINUSMA remains necessary. More than 30 troop- and police-contributing countries are participating under extremely difficult conditions. We pay tribute to them. We are counting on the members of the Council to renew the Mission's mandate for three months.

For its part, France has decided to end its military commitment in Mali. That is a decision we took in consultation with the Sahel countries and their neighbours, as well as with international partners. However, we intend to maintain our support for MINUSMA. We will also continue to provide humanitarian and development aid for the direct benefit of the Malian population. We will also remain committed to the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region and are considering strengthening our support to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. We will come back to the Council shortly with further details.

Mr. Parihar (India): I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for his briefing on the recent developments in Mali and the activities of MINUSMA in implementing its mandate. I also thank Ms. Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké, President of Women in Law and Development in Africa in Mali, for her insights.

At the outset, allow me to express our deepest condolences to the families of the two Egyptian peacekeepers who lost their lives in an attack on a MINUSMA convoy in Mopti on 7 March, as well as to the Government of Egypt. We also offer our condolences to the families of Malian security forces and civilians who were killed in several attacks during the reporting

period. We strongly condemn those attacks and call upon the Malian authorities to bring the perpetrators of such heinous crimes to justice.

Terrorists have been increasingly using asymmetrical means such as improvised explosive devices to target security forces and peacekeepers. MINUSMA has also recorded several instances of the use of drones by hostile elements to watch activities and movements of peacekeepers. We reiterate our call for the expeditious implementation of the provisions of resolution 2589 (2021), on protecting the protectors, adopted last year by the Council in order to enhance accountability for crimes against United Nations peacekeepers.

The security situation in Mali, particularly in the northern and central regions, has remained grim, as terrorists belonging to local affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida, such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam waal-Muslimin, continue to target civilians, security forces and MINUSMA peacekeepers. The security challenges are likely to aggravate with the restructuring of the international security presence in Mali. We also note the reported recent advances made by the Malian armed forces against terrorists.

The political and security situation in Mali saw no significant progress during the reporting period. The stakeholders in Mali have not yet reached an agreement on the modalities of, or any meaningful time frame for, the transition, despite the continuing engagement between the transitional authorities of Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is playing a key role in the process.

The multidimensional nature of the challenges faced by Mali is rooted in the long-standing imbalances in its constitutional, administrative and security set-up that have been left largely unaddressed for decades. There cannot be a quick-fix solution for such a complex crisis.

Mali's challenges need to be addressed through a comprehensive approach, incorporating the implementation of the 2015 Peace Agreement in particular, along with political-electoral reforms and the strengthening of security institutions in order to be able to provide security to the Malian people amid the growing threat of terrorism in the region. The international community can ignore terrorism in Mali and the Sahel at its own peril. The genuine demands of national and regional authorities to undertake counter-

offensive measures against armed and terrorist groups need to be addressed urgently. In that regard, noting the critical role of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, in coordination with MINUSMA in Mali and the Sahel, we reiterate our call for robust support to the Joint Force by the Council and the international community.

A lasting solution can be achieved only through a Mali-owned and -led process that is considered by the people of Mali to be inclusive and representative. We continue to encourage dialogue between Mali and ECOWAS towards reaching an agreement at the earliest about an acceptable timeline for political transition and elections, leading to the return of the constitutional order. Such agreement will also set the scene for the lifting of sanctions against Mali, thus shielding the people of Mali from further impact and stabilizing Mali's relations with its neighbours.

We commend the efforts of MINUSMA in assisting the Malian authorities. MINUSMA remains one of the most challenging of the peacekeeping missions. It is therefore important that MINUSMA be provided with adequate resources to implement its mandate. We also call for better coordination between MINUSMA and Malian armed forces.

India remains closely engaged with Mali in the sphere of development partnerships, which is reflected in such critical infrastructure projects as the ongoing construction of 393 kilometres of a high-voltage double-circuit transmission line from Bamako, Mali's capital city, to Sikasso, the country's second largest city. India is also assisting Mali in capacity-building through scholarships for higher-studies and professional-training programmes in India, including in defence- and security-related areas. India remains steadfast in supporting the Malian people in their quest for lasting peace, security and development.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Kenya, Gabon and my own country, Ghana (A3).

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/278) and thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General El-Ghassim Wane for his comprehensive briefing and insightful perspectives on the situation in Mali. We commend him for his continuous engagement with the regional actors and the Malian authorities and appreciate his efforts in resolving

the challenges in the country. We also welcome the participation in this meeting of Ms. Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké, who spoke on behalf of the Malian branch of Women in Law and Development in Africa, and commend her for her unique perspective.

The people of Mali are yearning for peace in their country, and so are Member States in the region. A swift return to constitutional order is what we believe will give the elected Government the legitimacy to lead the process of the comprehensive implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process.

The A3 acknowledges the efforts of the international community aimed at addressing the situation in Mali and particularly notes the Secretary-General's engagement with the transitional authorities and regional actors to adopt a consensual approach to dealing with the peace and security challenges in Mali as well as the reforms set out by the Assises nationales de la refondation. We also acknowledge the critical role being played by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in the country.

We pay tribute to the MINUSMA personnel who have recently lost their lives in the line of duty, and we stand with the gallant personnel who continue to risk their lives for the cause of peace and stability in Mali. We welcome the mediation role of MINUSMA and the use of its good offices in supporting the Malian peace process, including for the provision of training and technical and humanitarian assistance. We look forward to the renewal of the MINUSMA's mandate in June with elements that would enhance its logistical capabilities and effectiveness in dealing with the challenges in Mali.

Despite ongoing efforts, the A3 continues to remain concerned about the complex and dire political, security and humanitarian situation in Mali. We therefore wish to highlight the following four issues of concern. First, on the political front, we remain concerned by the slow progress of the implementation of the peace accord and the absence of a finalized timetable for the return to constitutional rule. We believe that the most sustainable way of addressing the situation in Mali is for the transitional authorities to adhere to the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance adopted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and by agreeing to a

credible timetable for a swift return to constitutional order. We welcome the decision taken by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS at its extraordinary summit held in Accra, Ghana, on Friday, 25 March 2022, urging the transitional authorities to adhere to the additional transitional period of 12 to 16 months. We note the ongoing discussions between the transitional authorities and the ECOWAS Mediator to finalize the chronogramme.

Secondly, terrorism remains one of the greatest threats to stability in Mali and the region at large. We deplore the upsurge in extremist attacks, including the use of improvised explosive devices against civilians, the military and MINUSMA personnel, which have exacerbated the security situation as evidenced in 103 security incidents recorded during the first three months of 2022, including 69 civilian deaths. While acknowledging the investigations that are being conducted into circumstances leading to the firing of rockets close to elements of MINUSMA on 22 March, we wish to encourage more engagement and information-sharing between the Malian armed forces and MINUSMA to ensure that such incidents, which undermine the safety of personnel, are curtailed.

We are also concerned by the impact of the uncontrolled exit of foreign fighters and mercenaries from Libya into the Sahel, which, coupled with the proliferation of arms, calls for a durable and holistic solution. The withdrawal of these extremist groups requires close monitoring and coordination to ensure a financed and effective programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in close coordination with neighbouring States and relevant regional and subregional mechanisms.

In the light of these security concerns, we believe that it is important to urgently address the challenges placed in the way of police- and troop-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) in rotating their personnel from the theatre, including several West African TCCs/PCCs, such as Senegal, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana, which have troops in the theatre that have remained beyond the recommended deployment in the Mission. This disturbing situation has morale, disciplinary and operational implications for the troops and the Mission, and we call on the Malian authorities to facilitate the required rotation without further delay. We also look forward to the outcome of the planned meetings of the Sahel Coalition as well as the African Union-United Nations Joint Strategic Assessment on

Security in the Sahel, with a view towards building a synergistic counter-terrorism network for the Sahel and coastal West Africa, comprising the Accra Initiative and the Multinational Joint Task Force, with the requisite sustainable funding.

Thirdly, the deteriorating human rights situation resulting from attacks by extremist groups and intercommunal conflicts requires greater attention. We condemn the abuses perpetrated against women, girls and children, including abductions, arbitrary detentions, sexual exploitation and abuse. These attacks constitute a violation of international human rights law. We urge the transitional authorities to intensify their investigations to ensure that the perpetrators of these atrocities are arrested and swiftly prosecuted.

We encourage additional support for Mali's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission to enable it to execute its mandate effectively. We express concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation characterized by forced displacements and the increase in the number of people who need humanitarian assistance. The A3 therefore endorses the Secretary-General's call for donors to respond more generously to the humanitarian appeal for Mali. The exacerbating impact of climate change and the coronavirus disease pandemic on the humanitarian situation also requires careful attention.

Fourthly, we welcome measures aimed at addressing the developmental challenges in Mali. In this regard, we commend the Peacebuilding Commission for its interventions in the country and believe that its role remains critical in addressing the underlying challenges there. We welcome the investment of \$8.4 million from the Peacebuilding Fund into initiatives targeting youth, women, agricultural self-employment and electoral-violence reduction, and we encourage more of such efforts, including an increase in contributions to the Fund to enable it to achieve its mandate.

In concluding, the A3 believes now more than ever that a quick return to constitutional rule and a comprehensive implementation of the peace accord is the surest way of bringing lasting peace to Mali. Time is of the essence, and the national political will and international support for such a course of action must be mobilized now.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane for his comprehensive briefing. We also listened carefully to Ms. Bintou Samaké, and we welcome

the participation of His Excellency Ambassador Issa Konfourou, Permanent Representative of Mali, in today's meeting.

At the outset, the United Arab Emirates affirms the need to intensify efforts to achieve stability and security in Mali, especially in the light of the current deteriorating political and security situation.

On the political front, we encourage intensifying national efforts to set a timetable for elections as soon as possible and in line with the aspirations of the people of Mali. In that context, we note the encouraging engagement currently taking place between the transitional authorities in Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which includes an openness for dialogue, the efforts of the Special Envoy, Mr. Goodluck Jonathan, and those of the joint technical team of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations. In addition, Security Council support for national and regional efforts remains necessary at this critical juncture.

We believe that long-term stability in the country will also require a recommitment to the key tenets of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and to ensuring its implementation by local authorities in cooperation with regional and international partners. Given the need to focus on the situation in central Mali, which is experiencing critical security developments, we look forward to finalizing the comprehensive political strategy to support stability in the region.

In that context, we stress the importance of promoting the effective, meaningful and equal participation of women in all ongoing political processes, and we commend the efforts made in that regard, including to increase the number of women on the Agreement Monitoring Committee and its subcommittees.

With regard to the security situation, we express concern over the threats that terrorist groups pose to the security and stability of Mali and the wider region. Those groups continue their attempts to extend their control and expand the scope of their operations despite the national, regional and international efforts to combat them. We once again condemn the targeting of peacekeepers by such groups, including the recent attack in Mopti, in central Mali, which claimed the lives of Egyptian peacekeepers. We express our condolences to the Arab Republic of Egypt and to the families of the victims. Such critical conditions and developments serve to highlight the need to intensify efforts to counter

extremism and terrorism in line with international law, including by ensuring the more efficient implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and by providing appropriate support to the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Given the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Mali, which has disproportionately affected women and children, the international community must continue to provide humanitarian aid and basic services for the 7.5 million people who are in urgent need of assistance.

In that regard, we highlight that addressing the security threats associated with climate change in Mali would help to ensure food and water security and contribute to achieving stability and development in Mali.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates affirms its continued support for development efforts in Mali and its path towards achieving prosperity and sustainable peace. We also take this opportunity to express our support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and its efforts.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks Special Envoy Wane and Ms. Samaké for their briefings. We welcome the representative of Mali here among us today.

We once again note the extreme complexity of the situation in Mali, its widespread impact on the entire Sahel region and the need to seriously reflect on the relevance of our approach to date to contribute to the stabilization of the country. I will focus my statement on three aspects that Mexico believes crucial at this juncture.

First, we recognize the renewed efforts that the Malian security forces have made in recent months to combat terrorist groups. We are aware that the main cause of the violence affecting the civilian population and hindering the establishment of State authority throughout the country is precisely the activity of such groups. It therefore remains imperative to put an end to their scourge in order to ultimately achieve sustainable peace in Mali.

At the same time, the legitimacy of the fight against extremism does not in any way exempt the State from its responsibilities and obligations in terms of human rights and respect for international humanitarian law. Mexico therefore expresses its grave concern about reports of civilian casualties in the operation recently

carried out in Moura, and we call on the transitional authorities to cooperate closely with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to shed light on what happened. A rigorous, independent and impartial investigation is essential in order to strengthen the population's trust in its armed forces and to enable the latter to fulfil their mandate, while fully respecting the rule of law.

Secondly, we urge the authorities to continue working with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to reach an agreement as soon as possible on an electoral timetable that puts an end to the protracted transition and allows the State to address the many pending reforms with the indispensable backing of the legitimacy granted by the popular vote.

Mexico regrets that the attention of all political actors in the transition process, in the absence of a decision regarding the elections, has unavoidably led to serious delays in the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement, whose follow-up bodies have not met for months, as we heard this morning. We must remember that there remain many tasks pending in order to meet the commitments agreed by the signatories of that agreement, from the decentralization of public administration to the necessary disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Thirdly, Mexico believes that, in order to neutralize the violence in Mali, the fragile and very worrisome economic development situation must be addressed; the historical exclusion of certain groups from the national political scene must end; and impunity must be combated through a credible, effective and independent justice system.

Regarding that last point, Mexico would like to reiterate its appeal to the Malian authorities to take into account the recommendations made in the report of the International Commission of Inquiry issued in 2020 (see S/2020/1332, annex). The work of the Commission must be harnessed to deliver justice to the victims and to break the cycle of violence that feeds on the grievances accumulated over years of conflict.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Wane and Ms. Bintou Founé Samaké for their briefings today.

I appreciated Ms. Samaké's insightful emphasis on the critical role of women under the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and

in peacebuilding in Mali. We fully endorse her call for the meaningful inclusion of women and women-led civil society organizations in the peace process. That should include younger women as appropriate. They are the rising generation. We also urge the transitional Government to make progress on the Algiers accord and to ensure the full and safe participation of women throughout the elections process in Mali, including ensuring that women are on the ballot, are registered to vote and have an opportunity to participate at all levels of the electoral process.

We welcome the efforts of Special Representative Wane and the brave peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to fulfil the Council's broad and robust mandate to support the Algiers accord between the Malian authorities and the signatory armed groups, protect civilians and support the political transition.

The United States expresses its deepest condolences and sympathy to the families and friends of the three Egyptian peacekeepers killed in attacks against MINUSMA last month.

The United States joins others on the Council in strongly condemning all attacks against peacekeepers, and that includes the disinformation campaigns that have hindered MINUSMA's ability to carry out its Security Council mandate. As mandated by the Council, those involved in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers or those planning, directing or committing acts in Mali that constitute human rights abuses or violations may be subject to Security Council sanctions. We call on the transitional Government to carry out transparent and credible investigations into attacks on peacekeepers or those who commit human rights abuses, and to hold those responsible accountable.

Like others, the United States is deeply troubled by developments in Mali since the Council last met on Mali on 11 January (see S/PV.8945).

First, the past three months have been marked by alarming accounts of human rights violations and abuses against civilians by terrorists armed groups and the Malian Armed Forces, with individuals linked to the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group. These reports must be investigated and those responsible held accountable. We are following closely the extremely disturbing accounts of hundreds of people killed last week in the village of Moura, in the Mopti region of Central Mali. The Malian

people deserve answers about what happened in Moura the week of 28 March and what led to the gruesome execution-style killing of over 35 people on 2 March in the Ségou region and about who was responsible.

We note that the Malian authorities have announced that they will launch an investigation into the events in Moura. We urge the authorities to also grant MINUSMA immediate access to both locations to conduct rigorous investigations — a task mandated by this very Council.

This increase in reports of human rights abuses is exactly why the United States continues to warn countries against partnering with the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group. Wagner forces have been implicated in human rights abuses, including execution-style killings in the Central African Republic and elsewhere. Wagner Group forces will not bring peace to Mali, will divert resources away from the fight of the Malian Armed Forces against terrorism, and will ultimately undermine the stability of the region.

Malian authorities are also responsible for the actions of their security partners. Operations that inflict harm on civilians and abuse human rights in the name of counterterrorism will backfire. I agree with my French colleague that these actions can drive some to actually join or support violent extremist organizations instead of neutralizing the threat.

Secondly, the United States is deeply concerned by the Malian authorities' disregard for the status-of-forces agreement with MINUSMA and the restrictions on the Mission's movements, especially in central Mali. The 22 March incident involving the Malian forces firing six rockets near peacekeepers in eastern Mali is unacceptable. It is an affront to all those who serve in United Nations peacekeeping missions. The transitional Government is responsible for ensuring the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and assets. Restrictions limit MINUSMA's ability to anticipate, deter and effectively respond to threats to civilians, including from violent extremist groups, and will only lead to more attacks against civilians and Malian forces. These restrictions must end so that MINUSMA can fulfil its mandate to protect civilians and foster peace.

Thirdly, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the transitional Government have yet to agree on an acceptable electoral timetable. We, along with fellow Council members, welcomed the strong action of ECOWAS in defence of democracy in

January. We call for continued dialogue that produces an acceptable electoral calendar so that the international community — but more importantly, the Malian people — know what to expect of the transitional Government. We share the deep disappointment of ECOWAS with the lack of political will the transitional Government has shown towards organizing elections, as it committed to do following the August 2020 coup d'état, which is now over 18 months ago. We urge the transitional Government to keep its pledge to the Malian people to return their country to democracy as soon as possible.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for briefing the Council and commend the excellent work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I also extend my thanks to Ms. Samaké for bringing an important civil society perspective. We support her call to include more gender language in the next mandate.

At the outset, we would like to express deep concerns for the hundreds of people reported to have been killed during a counter-terrorism operation in Moura. We express our condolences to the families. We urge credible and impartial investigations by the Malian authorities into these unclear circumstances, the facilitation of independent investigations by MINUSMA and immediate access for the Mission.

Today's discussion is particularly timely, as February should have marked a close to the transition period and a return to constitutional order in Mali. Instead, we have witnessed a severe escalation in security threats, a dire humanitarian situation and a dramatic shrinking of civic space, as the briefers just noted. Mali is also facing its worst food and nutrition crisis in a decade and the war in Ukraine is worsening the situation.

The rapid expansion of terrorist attacks in Mali today presents a serious concern over the proliferation of armed Islamist groups. The lack of State presence is creating a security vacuum conducive to non-State actors to further expand towards the south of Mali and the wider coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

The recent Human Rights Watch reports document disturbing attacks against civilians and local communities by the Malian army and armed groups. Albania strongly condemns the reported violence and calls for human rights and international humanitarian

law to be upheld by all and under all circumstances. In this context, we remain deeply worried about the methods adopted by the Wagner Group operating in Mali and the wider region.

As the Security Council, we need to maintain a strong and articulated commitment in Mali, strengthening our support for the population in order to foster development and strengthen the resilience of local communities. However, it is the responsibility of the Malian authorities to take ownership and finalize a comprehensive, politically led strategy to reach a durable solution to the conflict and restore democracy and stability.

Albania calls on the Malian authorities to guarantee the freedom of movement and action of MINUSMA in order to allow the fulfilment of its mandate. We commend MINUSMA for facilitating progress in this challenging environment, including by launching projects in cooperation with the local population, enabling thousands of people to have access to drinking water. We look forward to the mandate's renewal in June.

The political crisis and lack of commitment have contributed to severe delays in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We echo the Secretary-General's call on the Malian stakeholders to reach a consensus and build on the reforms articulated by the Assises nationales de la refondation for the implementation of the agreement, focusing on those related to the holding of elections. In this regard, we stress the need for all activities to be gender-responsive and build the capacity of women and girls.

Albania stands with ECOWAS and the African Union and fully supports their efforts to overcome the political impasse in Mali and preserve the democratic model in the region. We urge the Malian authorities to engage constructively with ECOWAS, MINUSMA and international partners in expediting the transition process and setting out a calendar for holding elections to return to constitutional order in a timely manner.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I too wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his reminders of the fundamental contributions that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to bring to Mali and to the stability of the region. I also warmly thank Ms. Samaké for providing us with her

real-world experiences, including on the nexus between gender, climate change and security in Mali.

We hope that the appointment of 15 more women to the Agreement Monitoring Committee can move such aspects even higher up on the agenda.

Let me now address the political transition. We are encouraged by the seemingly reduced distance in positions between Bamako and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the transitional timeline. ECOWAS should be commended on its persistence in pursuing dialogue. We urge Mali's transitional leaders to maintain a constructive dialogue with ECOWAS and to fulfil their promises of a swift return to constitutional order.

A year and half after the military took power by force in Mali, the security and humanitarian situations show few signs of improving. We remain especially concerned by the inability to protect Mali's youngest and most vulnerable, given the increasing reports of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, closed schools and the severe risk of acute malnutrition.

As we know, recent months have also seen a drastic increase in human rights violations and abuses. We underline the State's primary responsibility to ensure accountability and fight impunity in relation to any external actor that the transitional authorities have hired, including the Wagner Group.

We also reiterate the call from the Malian National Human Rights Commission and others for independent investigations of the horrific allegations of human rights violations and abuses in Moura. Let me be clear: in order to fulfil its mandate, MINUSMA must be given full access to investigate all allegations.

I want to again pay tribute to every single person within MINUSMA for their professionalism and tireless efforts. We remember the brave peacekeepers and others who recently lost their lives in the service of peace in Mali.

Let us not forget that part of the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers falls on the Council. There are considerations that we must pay extra attention to in the current changing security environments, including as Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force start to depart.

But in addition, there are certain conditions and safeguards that only the host country can ensure. Those

responsibilities should not be taken lightly and must start with a fundamental respect for MINUSMA and its mandate. MINUSMA has the mandate and know-how to support the political transition, the implementation of the peace agreement, respect for human rights, the rule of law and the protection of civilians. We therefore urge the transitional Government to continue to engage constructively with the Mission.

In conclusion, during the critical time ahead, we ask the Secretary-General to keep the Council closely informed about any added challenges or threats that may affect MINUSMA operations and our peacekeepers in Mali.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing and also listened carefully to the statement by Ms. Samaké. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Mali in this meeting.

Recently Mali's transitional authorities have made great efforts to improve the security situation and ease the humanitarian crisis, but they also face multiple challenges. The international community should bear in mind the overall situation in terms of maintaining regional stability, actively provide help and support, and make additional efforts that are conducive to peace and stability in Mali.

In connection with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/278), I would like to make the following observations.

First, recently the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the Malian transitional authorities have been in continuous communication on the issue of a political transition, striving to narrow their differences. China commends those efforts and hopes that the parties will reach an agreement as soon as possible to push the political process forward on the right track.

Making arrangements for the transitional period and the general election is only the first step. The key is to help Mali achieve long-term security and stability. The international community should support the transitional authorities of Mali in accordance with the consensus reached at the national reconstruction conference to advance the reform process, implement the peace agreement, formulate and implement a comprehensive strategy for the central region and help

Mali embark on the development path that best suits its national conditions.

Secondly, Mali is an important force in counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel region. Recently the Malian Government carried out a series of counter-terrorism military operations in the central and northern regions that have severely crippled terrorist and extremist forces, ensured the safety of local people and helped displaced persons return to their homes, which is conducive to the stability and development of those regions. Those efforts should be acknowledged.

Meanwhile, terrorist forces remain entrenched in the central and northern regions, and the withdrawal of foreign military forces also provides them with an opportunity to take advantage of the chaos and seek expansion. There should be no slack in the fight against terrorism. We should continue to support the Malian Government's efforts to combat terrorism and maintain stability, help it step up its capacity-building and respect its right to international security cooperation.

China has noted the concerns in some media reports about human rights violations in the counter-terrorism operations in the Moura region. The Malian side has already made clarifications, emphasizing that the relevant actions were aimed at rescuing the local people and that they have always respected human rights and were willing to conduct the relevant investigations. China hopes that all sides will exercise restraint and refrain from making groundless accusations before any conclusion is reached by the investigation.

Thirdly, the economic and humanitarian situation in Mali is daunting. Foreign trade, employment, production and investment have declined to varying degrees. Indeed, 42.7 per cent of Malians live in extreme poverty, 7.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and 960,000 children under the age of 5 suffer from severe malnutrition.

The international community cannot forget about the difficulties faced by African countries such as Mali. African development issues should not be marginalized. As a good friend of African countries, China will continue to stand by them, accelerate the implementation of the Global Development Initiative and outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and continue to support Mali and other African countries in their economic recovery.

Fourthly, the security risks faced by MINUSMA have continued unabated. It is heartbreaking that two Egyptian peacekeepers were killed in an attack last month. Improvised explosive devices are one of the major causes of casualties among MINUSMA peacekeepers. The Secretariat should take concrete measures in the light of the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's independent strategic assessment. It is essential to have an in-depth assessment of the impact of the withdrawal of foreign military forces on the work of MINUSMA and to identify weak links in medical support, intelligence-gathering and security so as to ensure that MINUSMA is not affected in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the safety of peacekeepers.

On 22 March, a security incident occurred between the Malian security forces and MINUSMA. Fortunately, there were no casualties. China notes that both sides have launched investigations and hopes that they will work together to find an appropriate solution based on the findings of the investigations so as to prevent any recurrence of similar incidents in future.

Mr. Flynn (Ireland): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing this morning and for the continued work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in an increasingly challenging environment. The Mission's work on the protection of civilians and human rights monitoring and reporting has never been more vital. I wish also to send my thanks to the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union for their continued work in pursuit of lasting peace and stability in Mali. I also welcome Ms. Samaké's presence here as a strong advocate for women in Mali and thank her for her important and informative briefing.

As we have heard, by almost every metric the situation in Mali continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. We are deeply disturbed by the increasing reports of killings of civilians, human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law. Unrest and humanitarian need, including an unprecedented food crisis, continue to grow as the transition process and the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remain stalled.

The reports of a massacre in the village of Moura last week following a counter-terrorism operation by the Malian Armed Forces are frankly horrifying. We offer our sincere condolences to the families of those killed.

There must be a thorough and transparent investigation into those allegations. We note the intention of the public prosecutor of the Mopti military court to open an investigation. Nonetheless, MINUSMA must be granted unfettered, timely and safe access to Moura in order to conduct a full investigation and to take action to ensure the protection of civilians. Those responsible for those and other violations and abuses must be brought to justice, regardless of affiliation or nationality.

As others have said today, human rights violations serve only to drive radicalization and contribute to the growth of terrorism and violent extremism. We call on the Malian authorities to tackle impunity and to ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with international law.

We are also increasingly concerned about reports of the presence of the Wagner Group in Mali. Their presence can only serve to fuel existing tensions, increase instability and violence and impede MINUSMA's efforts to protect civilians and provide support to the Malian armed forces.

We are also seriously concerned by the increase in civilian casualties as a result of attacks by armed extremist groups in the tri-border area and welcome the investigation of those attacks by MINUSMA.

There can be no doubt that civilians, including children, are bearing the brunt of sustained political tensions and insecurity in Mali. The 57 per cent increase in violations against children documented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/278) is simply unconscionable.

It is also deeply troubling that violations and abuses against women and girls, including conflict-related sexual violence, persist at a high rate and continue to be underreported. We urge holistic and integrated action in order to address gender equality and, in particular, to address the stigma of sexual and gender-based violence and deliver justice to survivors.

We condemn the ongoing and totally unacceptable attacks against peacekeepers by all parties. MINUSMA must be allowed to do its job to protect the Malian people. We call on the authorities to create a protective environment for civilians and MINUSMA, including by ensuring that all security actors operating on Malian territory respect the status-of-forces agreement and ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

We are convinced that the 2015 peace agreement remains a critical framework for ensuring lasting peace and stability in Mali. We are concerned about the slow progress of implementation of the agreement and urge all parties to accelerate action in that regard.

Finally, we call on the transitional authorities to agree on an acceptable timeline for the return to constitutional order and the holding of elections. Immediate action must be taken on essential reforms in order to facilitate a rapid return to democratic governance and lay the foundations to guide the long term stability and sustainable development that the Malian people so richly deserve.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Special Representative El-Ghassim Wane for his briefing on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the situation in the country. We listened very carefully to Ms. Bouaré Samaké, and we welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Mali in this meeting.

We are convinced that overcoming the existing challenges in Mali will be possible only if there is internal political stability in the country. We can see that the transition authorities are serious about their intention to gradually resolve the accumulated issues.

Restoring constitutional order is, of course, one of the priority issues. During the reporting period, we heard the Malian authorities repeat that Bamako is committed to gradually achieving this goal. The fact that the Malian authorities are conducting a broad national process to prepare for elections and the fact that they have created an extended working group for that purposes, as well as a dialogue group to relaunch negotiations with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), show their constructive approach and make it clear that they do not have a hidden agenda.

We hope that, in the near future, the negotiations between Bamako and ECOWAS will bear fruit. We call upon both sides to continue dialogue and on the mediators to continue their efforts. We share the concern expressed by the Malian authorities with regard to the worsening situation in the northern areas of the country. The withdrawal of the French military presence creates a security vacuum there.

We hear from Bamako that, as was the case last autumn, the decision to fully withdraw Operation Barkhane forces was taken without consultations with the Malian side. That is a violation of the bilateral agreements, and we think that it is extremely irresponsible.

We also share the assessments made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/278) with regard to the negative consequences for the implementation of the MINUSMA mandate and, more specifically, the security of peacekeepers, of actions taken by France and its European Union partners. It is also unclear what impact the withdrawal of Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force will have on combat readiness for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, who are to be on the front lines of fighting terrorism in the Sahara and the Sahel.

At the same time, I would like to recall that what is happening in Mali and the Sahel in general is a legacy of the intervention of Western countries in Libya in 2011. Since then, the region has become a target for banditry and terrorism. The fact that in 2013 our Western partners decided to lend assistance is certainly commendable, but upon taking a closer look of the outcome of that assistance, it is apparent that the situation did not improve from that time until 2021. And now, without having accomplished anything, they are dropping Mali on a trumped-up pretext, even though everyone agrees that it is a key country for stability and security in the Sahel region.

As Mali is left alone to face serious cross-border challenges, the transitional authorities are trying to protect their people on their own and through interaction with partners and organizations from other countries. The Malian authorities have a sovereign right to decide who they want to work with.

We welcome the intensification of counter-terrorism operations by the Malian armed forces and the successes in that regard, as a result of which a number of settlements in the centre of the country have been freed. We also pay tribute to the Malian armed forces and express our condolences to the families of those who perished — both military and civilian — and, of course, the United Nations peacekeepers.

We call upon one and all to respect the memory of all victims of terrorism. At the same time, we note that the general staff of the Malian armed forces are committed to human rights and international humanitarian law and

that Bamako is making efforts to investigate allegations of human rights violations. We view the information campaign about the so-called “Russian mercenaries” as part of a sordid geopolitical game.

We would like to point out that cooperation between Russia and Mali has a long history and tradition. Russia has been extending assistance to Malian armed forces on the basis of bilateral agreements. We are working to increase their combat readiness and train the military and law enforcement. There are currently approximately 200 Malian military personnel and nine police officers being trained in Russia.

We are convinced that the stabilization of Mali is not being helped by the regional sanctions imposed on it, or by the restrictions imposed by a number of Western countries. Those sanctions can serve only to compound the already very difficult situation, not to mention that they worsen the living conditions of ordinary Malians, as well as that of the people in other countries of the region. Under such conditions, Bamako and its neighbours will find it increasingly difficult to address the country’s challenges, chief among them terrorism.

We once again heard accusations against Russia today, stating that we are supposedly provoking famine in the Sahel. Let me recall that, some time ago, climate was the culprit responsible for everything. Now it is Russia. At the same time, Mali has had numerous sanctions levied on it. The borders are closed, the trade routes are blocked, and the people of the entire region are suffering. They do not have even the most basic income. But if we take a look at the slogans that ordinary people are voicing when they come out to protest, they mention Russia, but not at all in the way that Western countries would like to see. In that regard, I would like to note once again that the consequences of unprecedented anti-Russian sanctions, which have resulted in the disruption of all logistical and financial links and chains across the world, show most countries of the world, including those in Africa, how important it is to defend one’s own political independence and financial capacities so as to overcome the legacy of colonialism and give up any neo-colonial mechanisms that remain.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Russia will continue to extend support to Malians, including through collective efforts aimed at helping to stabilize the situation in their country. At the same time, we ask Bamako to have a balanced approach to crisis

settlement. In the original version of my statement, I was going to say that we hope that the traditional partners of Mali will take the opportunity to reject the logic of sermonizing, acting with superiority and using the language of sanction and work within the framework of respectful dialogue with Bamako to find a way of overcoming differences. But, having heard the discussions today, I am compelled to admit that this is probably not something that will happen, and the Western countries will once again fail to heed the appeal for equitable, mutually beneficial and respectful cooperation.

Ms. De Souza Schmitz (Brazil): At the outset, let me thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane and Ms. Samaké for their briefings and welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Mali to this meeting.

Recent reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali document a worrying dynamic, the persistence of high levels of violence and limited progress in the political process. It is painful to note that this trend was accentuated in the period covered by the latest report (S/2022/278). Of particular concern are accounts of serious human rights violations and a significant increase in the number of grave violations against children.

Brazil understands the seriousness of the terrorist threat in the Sahel and supports the efforts of the Malian transitional authorities in coordination with the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force in the fight against terrorist groups. But the human rights of the Malian population must not be compromised in the name of the fight against terrorism.

We take note of the decision by the Malian transitional authorities to launch an investigation into reports of summary executions of civilians in Moura allegedly carried out by members of the Malian armed forces with the support of foreign fighters. If the allegations are confirmed, it is essential that those involved answer for their actions in order to ensure that such abuses do not happen again. It is also important to note that the presence of foreign mercenaries on the ground is not a solution, much less a sustainable solution, to the security situation, and it might increase the risk of human rights violations, illegal exploitation of natural resources and political instability, as has been observed in crises unfolding elsewhere.

The current level of violence is directly related to the near-paralysis in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process. Further, the postponement of the return to the constitutional framework and the absence of an acceptable time frame for elections threaten the credibility of the reconciliation process in a scenario that becomes more complex with the presence of terrorist groups and signs of a worsening humanitarian situation.

We encourage the transitional authorities and other political forces in Mali to fulfil their commitments set forth in the peace agreement and accelerate the implementation of its provisions, such as the reintegration of former combatants. We also support the holding of elections within an acceptable and realistic time frame so that the transitional period does not last longer than necessary.

The violence of recent weeks and the stagnation of the political process must not make us lose sight of the root causes of the conflict. The eventual success of stabilization and reconciliation efforts depends on addressing Mali's development needs, especially in the north and the centre of the country. Accordingly, Brazil urges the Malian transitional authorities to finalize the comprehensive politically led strategy for the centre and highlights the importance of expediting progress on the development zone in the northern regions of the country.

We urge the transitional authorities to collaborate with the Economic Community of West African States so that sanctions imposed in response to the postponement of the elections may be lifted in the near future. Mali is already suffering from the negative impact of other conflicts on food prices, and there is a real risk that the current situation will turn into a humanitarian catastrophe. We must highlight the plight of the more than 960,000 children under the age of five who are at risk of acute malnutrition.

In June, the Council will discuss the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Recent developments, which include the withdrawal of troops from Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force, have significantly altered the conditions on the ground. Brazil considers that it is essential to ensure that MINUSMA has the necessary resources to support the implementation of the peace agreement and the political transition, as well as to protect civilians and

support the restoration of the authority of the Malian State in the centre.

Finally, Brazil welcomes MINUSMA's initiatives to improve communication with the Malian population about its mandate and activities. MINUSMA's strategic communications capabilities should be strengthened in order to maintain its ability to achieve its political protection and humanitarian goals. Brazil welcomes the commitment of the Secretary-General to mainstreaming strategic communications into both planning and day-to-day operational decisions of missions, including MINUSMA, as he stated in his Action for Peacekeeping Plus plan.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I want to start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his remarks today and, through him, pay tribute to all members of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), whether civilians or in uniform, serving the United Nations in Mali.

I also want to thank Ms. Samaké for her briefing. Her words are a clear reminder of the invaluable contribution women make, including in societies affected by conflict and poverty. We must ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the pursuit of lasting peace.

I also welcome the representative of Mali to our meeting.

Like other Security Council members, the United Kingdom is horrified by reports indicating that hundreds of people were killed in Moura last week following a counter-terrorism operation carried out by the Malian armed forces with the alleged involvement of the Wagner Group. This needs an urgent, transparent and impartial investigation to bring those responsible to justice. The Government must grant MINUSMA full access to Moura without further delay.

The latest reports from Moura follow a clear trend in a surge of human rights abuses since the Wagner Group deployed to Mali, as also highlighted in the deeply concerning Human Rights Watch report in March. We know that, as of early 2022, around a thousand Russian mercenary personnel have been stationed across Mali. Just as the presence of Russian mercenaries drove an increase in human rights violations and abuses in the Central African Republic last year, we fear we are now seeing the same in Mali. This underlines the extent

of Russia's malign activity globally, which serves to damage efforts to address peace and security in contexts beyond Ukraine.

With the threat to communities in Mali growing, it is vital that MINUSMA be able to carry out its human rights tasks. We thank MINUSMA for its continued efforts to investigate, document and report on all allegations. We encourage the publication of human rights findings in full and at the earliest opportunity.

We note with concern the increasing restrictions imposed by the Malian authorities on MINUSMA operations. MINUSMA's freedom of movement and its status-of-forces agreement must be respected. Only last month, United Kingdom peacekeepers came under fire from a Malian armed forces' helicopter. We look forward to receiving the outcome of the United Nations investigation into that concerning incident as soon as possible. We were deeply saddened to learn that three Egyptian peacekeepers were killed last month in improvised explosive device attacks. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to extend my deepest sympathies.

On the political transition, the United Kingdom continues to support the Economic Community of West African States' dialogue with the Malian authorities regarding a revised timeline for elections so that the sanctions can gradually be lifted and attention turned towards election preparations. We recognize the sincere desire of many Malians for substantive reform. However, we believe that it is only through elections and a return to constitutional, democratic rule that long-term reform can be driven forward, with the support of partners.

The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting those most in need in Mali, and we provided more than \$16 million in humanitarian aid in 2021. However, the mobilization of resources by the international community must also be accompanied by unimpeded, safe and sustained humanitarian access, including in those areas that are hardest to reach.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The Government of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/278). I thank my brother, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Head of the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his briefing.

on behalf of the Government of Mali, I would now like to respond to the Secretary-General's report and to the Council's observations, to which I have listened to carefully.

I begin with the need for a return to constitutional order in Mali, which was mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report and by several members of the Security Council. As the Council is aware, this issue is one of the priorities of the transitional Government, because Malians are committed to democracy. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the political and institutional instability that has become chronic in Mali is rooted in poorly organized elections and bad governance. The transitional Government is therefore keen to make some major reforms aimed in particular at ensuring the stability of institutions and a better future for the Malian people. It is also necessary to create minimum security conditions to allow for the holding of elections.

In that respect, the Malian Government remains committed to dialogue with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including on the duration of the transition. Furthermore, the Government of Mali calls for the immediate lifting of the unjust, illegal, illegitimate and inhuman sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). In that regard, I recall that, by an order of 24 March, the WAEMU Court of Justice ordered a stay of execution of the sanctions imposed by the WAEMU Conference of Heads of State and Government.

The Government of Mali notes with regret that, despite being notified by both Mali and the Court, and despite the human and social impact on the population, the Economic Community and the Conference of Heads of State have declined to execute the order, which is nevertheless effective immediately and not subject to appeal.

There is reason to wonder whether this is not a policy of double standards, motivated by a determination to suffocate the Malian people. That attitude is influenced by thinly veiled external agendas and pressures to punish a people for its political choices and achieve regime change.

On the security front, the Government continues to intensify its efforts to recruit, train and equip the

Malian Defence and Security Forces, with a view to strengthening their operational capacities. Those actions are producing very encouraging results on the ground.

Since December 2021, the Malian Defence and Security Forces have continued their large-scale offensives across the country, inflicting heavy losses on extremist groups, including the neutralization of terrorist leaders. Such operations have led to the destruction of several terrorist bases, a number of arrests and the recovery of a large quantity of war material. They have strengthened the population's sense of security, leading to the return of more than 80,000 internally displaced persons to their places of origin.

We are determined to continue and intensify those military actions, with the ultimate objective of protecting our people and their property and gradually re-establishing the authority of the State and basic administrative and social services throughout the country. That will help to create the necessary conditions for the holding of credible and inclusive elections. I salute all partners that support Mali in achieving such an objective.

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to certain members of the Council who, without justification, accuse the Government of Mali of utilizing a private security company, as I heard at the previous meeting (see S/PV. 8945). I forcefully reiterate that Mali has made no such commitment. Mali has maintained a relationship of State-to-State cooperation with the Russian Federation since 1960. It is thanks to that cooperation that Mali continues to obtain military equipment for its security and that Russian trainers and instructors are currently in Mali to advise and train the Malian military in the use of the equipment obtained by Mali from the Russian Federation.

That said, Mali remains willing to cooperate with all its traditional partners. We are open to all our partners that are willing to help us to restore peace and security, while respecting the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Mali.

All Council members mentioned the need to expedite implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. I would like to emphasize how fully committed the Government remains to its diligent and intelligent implementation of that Agreement. This commitment was reinforced by the Assises nationales de la

refondation in December 2021, which recommended, inter alia, the drafting of a new Constitution that would set up, among other things, the Senate, and the acceleration of the process of decentralization and deconcentration of the State. I would like once again to salute Algeria's active role in this and the support of the international mediation team.

With respect to the participation of women in the peace process, I am pleased to inform the Council that the Government has shared a list of 15 additional women to be included in the Agreement Monitoring Committee and its four subcommittees. Despite the Government's ambitious and concrete proposals, the Agreement's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/reintegration process is experiencing some difficulties. In this regard, the Malian Government is waiting for the list of signatory movements to allow the reinsertion of former combatants to begin.

With regard to the development issues addressed in the Agreement, and contrary to the assertions made by the Secretary-General, the Malian Government remains committed to implementing development programmes in the northern regions. By way of illustration, I am delighted with the launch of the 16 projects selected within this framework on 21 October, despite the difficult economic situation in my country following the economic and financial blockade decided by ECOWAS and WAEMU. I hereby appeal to all of Mali's partners to contribute to the financing of this specific strategy for development of the northern regions of Mali.

The Secretary-General and several members of the Security Council have expressed concern about the human rights situation in Mali. I would like to emphasize that the Government remains very committed to respecting and ensuring respect for human rights by national and international forces alike, in accordance with our historical values enshrined in the 1236 Kouroukan Fouga Charter of Emperor Soundiata Keita. Until January 2012, Mali was cited as an example for its respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The complex crisis that we have been enduring for 10 years and the loss of control of certain parts of the national territory have, unfortunately created conditions for the violation of human rights. However, there is no deliberate will on the part of the Malian authorities to grant impunity in proven cases of human rights violations.

Thus, the Malian justice system is systematically seized each time cases of human rights violations are reported. A session of the Court of Assizes specially devoted to cases of terrorism and serious violations of human rights was held in Bamako in October 2021. Previously, on 30 June 2021, the Court of Assizes of Mopti had condemned 12 individuals accused in connection with the Koulogon-Peul attacks, in the Bankass district, which had caused the death of 37 people. This demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Mali, despite the many challenges, to sparing no effort to fight impunity. Other assize sessions will take place this year to give appropriate follow-up to several ongoing investigations and proceedings, in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Mali.

It is true, however, that the security conditions on the ground, the absence of competent State services in certain localities and the lack of resources and expertise in certain areas do not favour the rapid outcome of open procedures. This is an opportunity for me to plead for a strengthening of international cooperation with Mali in order to help it meet the challenges in that regard, in terms of training, equipment, expertise and adequate funding. The Government of Mali reiterates its appeal to its partners to help restore State authority throughout its national territory — an essential condition for improving the human rights situation in the country.

Regarding the ongoing military operations in the Moura area, 17 kilometres north-east of Kouakourou in the Djenné district of the Mopti region, it should be noted that they follow very specific information that made it possible to locate the holding of a meeting between different *katibats*. This allowed the neutralization of 203 combatants of armed terrorist groups. After the first hearings carried out by the national gendarmerie, those arrested were transferred to the specialized judicial unit, responsible for investigating terrorism cases.

Received yesterday, 6 April, by the Prime Minister, the President of Tabital Pulaaku, the representative association of the Peul community, underlined that Moura was indeed a terrorist sanctuary, before affirming bluntly that the allegations made against the Malian Armed Forces are false. In this regard, I would like to recall that respect for human rights and international humanitarian law remains a priority in the conduct of operations by our armed and security forces. The same applies to the opening of an investigation each time allegations are made against the Malian Armed Forces.

Regarding the specific case of the Moura events and following the allegations of alleged abuses committed against civilians in the period from 23 to 31 March in that area, the military prosecutor decided to open investigations by the national gendarmerie to carry out in-depth investigations in order to shed light on these allegations, despite the ongoing military operations.

A judicial transport will be carried out very soon on the site in Moura by the military prosecutor, exercising his judicial police powers. He will be accompanied by a forensic pathologist, a technical and scientific police team and investigators. The public will be kept regularly informed of the progress of these surveys, the results of which will be made public. Pending the conclusions of this investigation, we call on all stakeholders to exercise restraint, to avoid any talk of massacres, allegations and other unfounded accusations made against the Malian Armed Forces, with an ulterior motive.

Furthermore, the Government of Mali remains concerned about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Mali. The humanitarian situation has been further exacerbated by last year's poor rainy season, the negative impact of ECOWAS and WAEMU sanctions on the populations, as well as insecurity in the central regions of the country, which are our most productive regions. To alleviate their suffering, the Government is working, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners to provide the necessary assistance to our compatriots in situations of vulnerability.

In conclusion, I will say that the crisis in Mali, which has had a major impact on the stability of the entire West African and Sahel regions, remains complex and difficult. Its lasting resolution is the primary responsibility of Malians. The Government of Mali remains determined to play its full part for the return of peace and security throughout the national territory by using political and security levers, socioeconomic development, justice and reconciliation.

However, the achievement of this ambitious project requires the understanding and support of all of Mali's partners. That is why I would like to ask here for the understanding of our partners and to request the immediate lifting of the sanctions, which are affecting a country already weakened by several years of political, security, economic and health crisis, especially at a time when our Malian Armed Forces are gaining confidence and winning victories on many fronts.

The people and the Government of Mali reiterate their appreciation and their thanks for the enormous contribution of the United Nations to the ongoing stabilization efforts in my country, particularly through MINUSMA.

I pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of this crisis — civilians and soldiers, foreigners and

Maliens — who have fallen on the field of honour in Mali.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.