



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8703rd meeting

Wednesday, 15 January 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Dang	(Viet Nam)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	South Africa	Ms. Mogashoa
	Tunisia	Mr. Baati
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Norman-Chalet

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2019/983)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

20-01130 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10 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/2019/983)

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.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Tiébilé Dramé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali. Mr. Dramé is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, to participate in this meeting.

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/2019/983, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council today in the presence of His Excellency Mr. Tiébilé Dramé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, on the recent developments in the situation in Mali. I welcome Mr. Dramé.

The security situation in Mali and in the Sahel region as a whole is deteriorating at an alarming rate. Last week, 18 peacekeepers were wounded in an attack on the camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Tessalit, and recently 89 Nigerien soldiers were killed in an attack on their base near the Malian border. On 4 January, 14 children lost their lives in an attack on a bus close to the Malian border in northern Burkina Faso. Terrorist groups are proliferating in the Ménaka and Gao regions. We have seen an increase in improvised explosive device attacks on our convoys, which have wounded several Blue Helmets. These incidents occur

almost daily or at least with great frequency. I also note that the protective measures that the force has been taking for over a year have helped to limit casualties, although more must be done in that regard. Terrorism continues to fuel intercommunal violence in central Mali. There are now more displaced people suffering from hunger in the Mopti region than in the past.

Politically, the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali has been slow and uneven. Important decisions have been postponed due to disagreements between and among the signatory parties. However, significant progress has also been made. The inclusive national dialogue was concluded in Bamako on 22 December, nine months after it was announced. The process was at times difficult, but the consultations within the framework of the dialogue were thorough and inclusive, without any taboo subjects. I congratulate the Government of Mali and all stakeholders who have participated peacefully and constructively throughout the country. Their ideas, opinions and concerns are important and should be taken into account as we move forward. I am particularly encouraged by the high level of participation of women in that respect. There can be no lasting peace without their contribution. I also commend the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad for having joined the final stages of the dialogue and for its valuable contribution to the discussions. We regret, however, the absence of opposition parties from the national dialogue.

The conclusion of the inclusive national dialogue is a welcome development. It is now important that the Government of Mali respect its commitment to implementing the outcome and continue to reach out to members of the opposition. That will require charting a clear path for the future, including the adoption and implementation of a revised electoral and reform timetable, as well as the holding of legislative elections and a constitutional referendum. I urge all political actors to work together constructively to implement the conclusions of the dialogue. The Malian people need to see and feel that their voice has been heard and their concerns taken into account.

We hope that the conclusion of the dialogue will also give new and urgent impetus to the implementation of the peace agreement. It is now important that the Agreement Monitoring Committee resume its meetings. In that connection, I welcome the forthcoming session of that high-level Committee on 19 January. It is essential that the signatory parties seize that opportunity to

agree on concrete next steps to achieve the goals set out in resolution 2480 (2019). Significant progress has been made, including the disarmament and integration of former combatants into the defence and security forces and the creation of the legal framework for the establishment of the northern development zone. But more needs to be done in a context where growing security challenges threaten to reverse the hard-won gains made since the signing of the peace agreement.

(spoke in English)

The rapid and thorough implementation of the peace agreement remains the only viable path for the stabilization of Mali. It provides a framework for the political and institutional reforms required to restore and decentralize State authority in order to build a Malian State that reflects the diversity and interests of all its citizens. The peace agreement also provides for mechanisms to address the grievances of those Malians who feel excluded from the country's political life and economic development and who see little hope for their future.

The redeployment of the reconstituted units of the Malian defence and security forces to northern Mali remains an urgent priority. On 6 January, the Malian authorities started the deployment of the first reconstituted battalion from Bamako to Kidal via Gao. It is expected to arrive in Kidal by the end of the month. That is an important step towards restoring State authority across the country.

The deployment of the reconstituted units will also pave the way for the redeployment of a more effective State administration and public services — most importantly, justice officials, teachers and health workers in the north. I commend the Malian parties for reaching agreement on the modalities for the redeployment and the progress made to date. Their continued commitment and perseverance will be essential to achieving that important goal.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and MINUSMA colleagues, who have provided critical support for the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and for facilitating the deployment of those units to Kidal and eventually the entire north, further demonstrating the critical role that MINUSMA plays in creating the conditions for the peace process to unfold.

In recent months, in line with resolution 2480 (2019), MINUSMA has done its utmost to implement its second strategic priority in the centre of the country, while continuing to carry out tasks in support of its primary strategic priority in the north. Its increased presence and activity in the Mopti region has contributed to preventing a further escalation of intercommunal violence and large-scale massacres.

The establishment of temporary operating bases has increased MINUSMA's ability to provide security, protect the local population and facilitate the return of the national security forces and Government services to the Koro, Bankass and Bandiagara *cercles*. Recent visits to the Mopti region, conducted by the Malian authorities and MINUSMA, have further reinforced the collaboration between the Mission and the host Government.

The Mission's added focus on central Mali has required it to divert key capabilities — such as air assets, its quick reaction force, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets — from Gao to Mopti, as outlined in the report (S/2019/983). It is not feasible for MINUSMA to implement its additional strategic priority in the centre without additional resources. Attempting to do so has resulted in dangerous gaps in areas in northern Mali where the Mission's presence is critical and urgently needed, such as Ménaka and Gao.

In order to address that challenge, MINUSMA has developed a viable plan to adapt its uniformed components within the authorized troop and police strength, while taking into account the needs of the civilian component to effectively implement its mandate in central and northern Mali.

The plan is an integral part of an overarching strategy to support and enhance the Mission's good offices, mediation, reconciliation, capacity-building and technical and logistical support to Malian authorities in order to stabilize and secure population hubs in the centre; create favourable conditions for the restoration and expansion of State authority across the country; and provide basic social services so that those who have suffered the most — ordinary Malians — will finally reap the benefits of the peace process.

The plan provides for the establishment of a mobile task force that will enhance the Mission's ability to implement its mandate and protect civilians. It will make MINUSMA more agile, flexible and mobile, with tailored units, enhanced capabilities and — most

importantly — with additional air mobility. The plan is ambitious and its successful implementation hinges upon the support of the Council and other member States, troop and police contributors, the host Government and other partners.

Obtaining the required capabilities will be challenging, but I insist that it is indispensable for MINUSMA to deliver on its mandate. It is also an integral part of efforts to further enhance the Mission's performance. I therefore call on all partners to support the implementation and help the Secretariat mobilize the required resources and capabilities to ensure that MINUSMA remains fit for purpose.

In addition, in order to achieve the implementation of the plan and fulfil its mandate the Mission urgently requires access to additional land in both Gao and Mopti. I urge the Government of Mali to make it available as quickly as possible as per ongoing discussions.

Increased and sophisticated capabilities notwithstanding, MINUSMA can only be as effective and efficient as the parties and partners want it to be. Political will remains the most important enabler for any peacekeeping operation to be effective. I therefore reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal to all Malian leaders to display the necessary leadership and work together to address the challenges their country faces, with the support of the international community.

(spoke in French)

Lastly, MINUSMA is only one element of a broader collective response to address instability and violence and their root causes in Mali and the Sahel and to protect civilians. We are encouraged by the strong commitment expressed by the Heads of State of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to combat terrorism in Mali and the Sahel, with the support of other international forces. National and international forces play an essential role and their contribution remains vital, even if a military solution alone will not be enough to solve the problems faced by Mali and the region.

The United Nations remains strongly committed to working with all its partners to address the root causes of terrorism, instability and violence in Mali and the Sahel. As part of its work in the Sahel, the Mission will spare no effort to provide the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel with operational and logistical support, in line with resolutions 2391 (2017) and 2480 (2019), and has

responded positively to all requests it has received from the Joint Force.

However, to date, the Joint Force has been unable to take full advantage of that support, as it does not have the capacity to transport the essential consumables that MINUSMA provides to all its sectors and contingents. Therefore, we are prepared to implement more creative and proactive solutions to ensure that the necessary support reaches the Joint Force, in line with the current mandate.

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

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

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) *(spoke in French)*: First of all, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations for his briefing.

Six months following the adoption of resolution 2480 (2019), our meeting today is an opportunity to assess the progress that has been made. I would like to make three points.

My first point is related to the security situation in the Sahel, which has changed. We are now faced with geographical spread and an evolving threat. Terrorist groups continue to adapt to challenges. As they are unable to control territory, they seek to prevent the return of State authority. Although civilians are the primary victims, soldiers in the Sahel have also suffered heavy losses. I pay tribute to the memory of all victims, including soldiers.

Given the situation, France believes that there is an urgent and important need to respond. France organized a summit with the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which was held on Monday in Pau, in which the Secretary-General and representatives of the European Union, the African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie participated. At the end of the summit, we decided together to establish a coalition for the Sahel. The coalition's military objective will be to continue to weaken terrorist movements over time. Its political objective will be to ensure the return of State authority to all regions of the Sahel, including Kidal and northern Burkina Faso.

France invites all interested countries and organizations to join the initiative. It will be organized around four pillars: the fight against terrorism;

strengthening the capacity of the defence and security forces of the countries of the Sahel; support for the return of State authority; and economic and social development. Several initiatives that we conduct with our European Union partners, in particular Germany, are already part of that framework, such as the Alliance for the Sahel and the Partnership for Stability and Security in the Sahel.

The aim is therefore to increase the support we provide to the countries of the G-5 Sahel and to encourage them to implement reforms in the area of security and also in the areas of governance and human rights. Once we have established those conditions, we will succeed in eradicating terrorism. The coalition will be based on effectiveness and results. Heads of State will meet in Nouakchott in June to closely monitor the implementation of the coalition and the fulfilment of mutual commitments.

My second point pertains to the peace process and the political situation in Mali. The inclusive national dialogue was a milestone. The constructive nature of the exchanges between signatory movements and other signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali bodes well moving forward, and we welcome the fact that a number of women participated in that undertaking. Progress has been made in the implementation of the peace agreement. The redeployment to the north of the initial units of the reconstituted Malian army is presently under way; an initial step is to be deployment to the city of Kidal, from where the army and the Malian Administration have for too long been absent.

France commends the holding of the meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee set for 19 January, as the Committee's work has been on hold since August. It is important to take advantage of this opportunity to achieve greater progress on other proposed measures, complete the transfer of 30 per cent of State resources to local authorities, carry out a pilot project for development in the north and ensure the participation of women in the process. The role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will remain vital in all these areas, and it is critical that it be provided with the resources necessary to discharge its duties.

The Algiers agreement must remain our lodestar, as it provides the sole framework for lasting reconciliation among the Malian, which is a prerequisite for achieving

the stabilization of the country. As has been stated on several occasions by the Security Council, those who hinder its implementation risk the imposition of sanctions.

I wish to conclude by touching on the criticism levelled against international partners and MINUSMA in particular. MINUSMA remains the linchpin of the international mechanism in Mali and carries out functions that no other actor can, from the protection of civilians, support for the implementation of the peace agreement to the provision of logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The Mission has sustained tremendous losses, and I would pay tribute here to the commitment made by the troop-contributing countries and their personnel. Given the circumstances, it is important that there be better communication vis-à-vis the respective actions of the various international stakeholders in Mali. It is also important to listen to criticism and to reflect on ways to make improvements. France therefore welcomes the adaptation plan of the MINUSMA force aimed at making it more mobile and agile so that it can better deliver on its mandate and protect civilians. It is an ambitious but timely plan, and France encourages all members of the Council to support it.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I should like through you, Mr. President, to express my sincere gratitude to Under-Secretary-General General Lacroix for his excellent briefing, in which he laid out the plan to strengthen the force in order to make it even more operational and effective.

I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council — the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — on this very important item on the agenda, the situation in Mali.

I wish to emphasize three points, as did the Ambassador of France — not on the same issues, but three points nonetheless.

First, we appreciate the international and regional efforts towards peace, security and stability in Mali, including the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and African regional and subregional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), which have always put security in Mali at the top of their agendas.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/983), which contains relevant information on the recent developments in Mali in the political, security and development areas, and we very much appreciate the work done at the level of the secretariat of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and that done by the United Nations entities in Mali and in the region to help to meet the multiple and complex challenges that Mali and the region face today. We pay tribute to all victims of terrorist attacks in Mali and in the Sahel region, including civilians and members of the national defence and security forces as well as personnel of the G-5 Sahel and all allied international forces.

We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali following on from the Algiers process, particularly in the area of political and social reform, with the successful holding, from 14 to 22 December 2019, of the inclusive national dialogue, which had more than 3,000 participants, including representatives of the movements signatories to the agreement, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups.

We welcome also the headway made in the areas of security and defence with the integration of 1,330 former combatants from the signatory movements and members of the Operational Coordination Mechanism, as well as the adoption of the action plan of the National Council for Security Sector Reform.

Also encouraging is the promulgation of the texts that constitute the legal and institutional framework of the Northern Development Zone in Mali, as well as the establishment of a sustainable development fund with \$72 million.

We welcome also the process of national reconciliation, with the promulgation of the law on national accord and the start of hearings for the victims in December 2019.

In the spirit of the progress made recently, we welcome the calls made by the President of the Republic and the Malian Government for the people to continue to support the international forces on the ground.

I take this opportunity to call on bilateral and multilateral partners to step up their support for the Government of Mali in the implementation of the agreement in a context that, as the Council is aware,

is particularly difficult. We believe that the situation in Mali and across West Africa and the Sahel urgently requires that concerted efforts be deployed to help the defence and security forces by strengthening logistical, operational and intelligence capacities. These kinds of measures will undoubtedly help the Malian authorities to re-establish their control and influence across the national territory and to resume the provision of indispensable social services for their people.

We also welcome MINUSMA's strategy aimed at increasing its mobility and support for the people of the centre. In that regard, we support the second strategic priority laid out in resolution 2480 (2019) regarding the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, which provides for support to the Malian authorities in their efforts to protect civilians in the centre of the country.

The intensification of the actions of and attacks by terrorist armed groups in the northern and central regions of Mali as well as in the tri-border area — between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger — is a cause for real concern. In the Niger, for example, all the attacks in the Tahoua and Tillabéri regions, including the recent ones in Inates and Chingodiar, which killed 71 and 89 lives, respectively, have been perpetrated by terrorist groups operating in the border zone with Mali. That is why it is urgent for the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali to be speeded up within the context of the Agreement Monitoring Committee and that the presence of the Malian State be effective throughout the country.

I should like also above all to strongly urge partners to honour their commitments with regard to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. I welcome the expansion of the tripartite technical arrangement between MINUSMA, the European Union and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to other operational areas and would recall that, for reasons of effectiveness, there is a need to ensure the prior involvement of the Joint Force in the delivery of the required support, and I welcome the comments made by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix on this front. We propose that this should be done through existing United Nations channels in the countries concerned.

In the same vein, we invite the international community, especially the United Nations, to take into account the highly relevant conclusions of the ECOWAS Summit held in Abuja, which adopted a 2020-2024 action plan with an initial allocation from

member countries of \$2.3 billion, including \$1 billion of our own funding.

To conclude, we call on regional and international partners to expedite the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its support plan. We believe that the strategy is a key element of international and national efforts for sustainable peace, stability and development in Mali in particular and the Sahel region in general.

Lastly, I align myself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Nicolas De Rivière of France on the decision taken on 13 January in Pau between the President of the G-5 Sahel and the President of France, with the participation of the Secretary-General, the Chairman of the African Union Commission, senior authorities of the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing.

Last June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2480 (2019). Its aim was to encourage the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to show follow-through and progress towards the benchmarks in the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Six months later, the progress that we had hoped for has yet to materialize — a stark illustration of how little meaningful progress has been made in the peace process. The inaction of the signatories is not without consequence. Malian civilians are being killed, maimed and abducted with impunity. The country's displaced population doubled last year, and today millions suffer from food insecurity, with a full 30 per cent of the population malnourished.

Furthermore, physical insecurity and criminality constrain United Nations and non-governmental organization access to vulnerable populations to deliver life-saving assistance. That lack of access raises significant concerns with respect to humanitarian principles, and potentially under international humanitarian law. In that environment, terrorist groups are taking advantage of ungoverned spaces, exploiting grievances and fuelling intercommunal conflict.

United Nations peacekeepers face extraordinary dangers, as the wounding of 18 last week in Tessalit reminded us, and the Malian armed forces are suffering critical losses. We appreciate Ambassador Konfourou's

country's continued commitment to achieving peace and security, and we extend our condolences to families for that loss of life. The United States honours those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and we commend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and international security forces for their fight against that escalating regional crisis.

We also commend and recognize France's unwavering commitment in Mali. Ambassador De Rivière's country's sacrifices do not go unnoticed, and the United States values France's leadership in the region.

The Council has, however, spent years asking the signatories to make meaningful progress towards implementing the agreement, even by providing them with achievable benchmarks. Despite our robust support, we continue to witness inaction and a deteriorating security environment. It is therefore time for the Council to begin developing an alternative approach to addressing growing instability in Mali. To that end, I would like to offer a few observations.

First, we must recognize that peacekeeping missions are not the answer to growing terrorist threats in Mali. A clear-eyed assessment of MINUSMA is needed to determine how the Mission most effectively complements other security activities in the region.

Secondly, we must re-evaluate MINUSMA's role in supporting the implementation of the Algiers agreement. MINUSMA's success is dependent on the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups, but since 2015 both have proven unwilling to implement the agreement. We should consider deprioritizing MINUSMA's support in implementing the agreement and instead focus the Mission on protecting civilians. That would allow MINUSMA to direct its resources to the more densely populated and strategically important centre, where it can have an immediate impact. Additionally, the Mission can reduce its size, allowing Member States to apply resources to more effective efforts in the region. If the signatories are serious about MINUSMA's continued support to the agreement, they can demonstrate their resolve by implementing the benchmarks in resolution 2480 (2019) before 29 June, when MINUSMA's mandate expires.

Thirdly, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, must sanction

individuals and entities on all sides of the conflict, including Government officials and armed group members who meet sanction designation criteria.

Fourthly, we must ensure that MINUSMA receives high-performing troop and police contingents. The United States is concerned by reports of training and capability shortfalls, undeclared caveats and commanders unwilling to take risks or comply with orders. Those types of challenges, especially in a mission as complex and dangerous as MINUSMA, hinder the Mission, increase the risk of both peacekeeper and civilian casualties and support a narrative of peacekeeping ineffectiveness. We call on the Secretary-General to increase reporting on MINUSMA's troop and police performance, in line with the requirements of resolution 2436 (2018), to ensure that memorandums of understanding accurately reflect the requirements of the Mission and to swiftly hold poor performers accountable.

Finally, any changes to MINUSMA's mandate must be considered as part of an integrated and transparent regional security strategy. The United States commends the current initiatives of our European and African partners, including members of the Economic Community of West African States, to coordinate security activities and expand counter-terrorism capacities. We look forward to seeing how those initiatives enhance regional security and complement MINUSMA.

The United States desires peace, security and a brighter future for the people of Mali, the Sahel and West Africa. We are committed to that future, which is why we are the largest financial contributor to MINUSMA and the largest supporter of predeployment training for its contingents. But it is past time for Malian citizens to benefit from our commitment and the tireless work of the peacekeepers. I look forward to working with members of the Council between now and June to develop a new approach that disrupts the status quo and prepares the way for a future that the Malian people deserve.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his briefing.

Russia is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in many parts of Mali in recent months. Tragic reports of deaths of military personnel

and civilians at the hands of jihadists demonstrate the magnitude and severity of the threats facing the country and its vulnerability to the destabilizing forces of terrorists, organized crime and extremist ideology.

A central factor to normalize the situation in Mali remains the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We note that progress has been achieved in implementing some of its provisions. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for former combatants is yielding positive results. We trust that units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism will be deployed as expeditiously as possible to the north of the country. We call on the Malian authorities to consistently strengthen the capacities of the regular armed forces and to reclaim the positions lost in Ménaka and Gao.

We view the inclusive national dialogue launched in the fall as a unifying platform for determining the future of the country. However, within the framework of the obligations that have been undertaken by the parties to the Algiers peace agreement, the inclusive participation of all stakeholders is of paramount importance.

We note that factors such as the high levels of inter-ethnic tensions, persistent attacks by terrorists and extremists and delays in the restoration of State governance institutions in the central and northern parts of the country could significantly slow or even undermine the positive changes that have been observed. We are very concerned about the humanitarian situation. The victims of violence remain the most vulnerable groups — women, children and the elderly. We welcome the steps taken by the authorities and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to resolve intercommunal disputes and to disarm the local self-defence forces.

The Libyan dimension continues to have a very negative impact on the situation in Mali and in the region as a whole. The so-called Liptako-Gourma triangle, located on the borders of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso, where we see the juncture of the greatest challenges facing the region, has become all too familiar. We also regret to note that the “malignant tumour” of terrorism extends to other West African countries.

In that regard, we support the concrete steps taken by the States of the Group of Five for the Sahel to

establish the Joint Force in order to combat terrorism and organized crime, as well as the counter-terrorism operations that they are conducting. We would particularly like to note the commitment of the countries of the Economic Community of West African States to investing significant resources in overcoming the increasing security challenges. The principle of African solutions to African problems is the cornerstone for the nation-building of sovereign States on the continent. We continue to provide bilateral support to the Sahara-Sahel countries.

We would like to highlight in particular the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali in facilitating the settlement process. We firmly believe that the Mission needs comprehensive support, especially in an environment where it essentially has to implement its mandate on two fronts at the same time, in central and northern Mali. At the present time, we are not prepared to consider options for a significant adjustment in the scope of its operations or a drawdown.

In conclusion, we would like to convey our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for his effective leadership of MINUSMA.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, who will join us via video-teleconference. I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his insightful overview of the operations of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines strongly condemns the mortar attack on a military base in Kidal in northern Mali. We wish the injured a rapid and full recovery.

MINUSMA has been entrusted with the very important role of supporting the Malian authorities as they strive to fully implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We recognize that across such a vast territory, plagued by the multifaceted challenges of persistent underdevelopment increasingly exacerbated by climate change, the restoration and extension of State authority depend on the support of a wide range of actors across the region and within the international community.

Successful regionalism creates many buffers that insulate Member States from the rigours of a rapidly

changing, and often tumultuous, global political economy. Deepened integration must, however, be built not only on security cooperation but also across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. Indeed, without development, there can be no security. Only the structural changes brought about by an improvement in the standard of living will draw people away from the lure of armed groups as they become more firmly embedded in legitimate socioeconomic activity. We encourage our partners and friends in the international community to explore all options available in bringing investment to this region.

In order to solve and prevent violent extremism and the proliferation of armed groups, we need to ensure inclusion, open dialogue and the return of full State authority to the affected areas. Also, the perpetrators of terrorist and extremist acts must be held accountable.

We welcome the redeployment of 1,330 troops, which, through the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, will be instrumental in restoring the rule of law and trust. We also share concerns about the challenges with regard to the implementation of the peace agreement. In particular, we support better representation of women in the peace and other political processes, and we commend MINUSMA's efforts in that regard.

In addition, we note the continued grave violations against children, including recruitment by armed groups. In order to build lasting peace for future generations in Mali, we must protect children.

We encourage MINUSMA to continue its community engagement initiatives to ensure buy-in from the communities and people in Mali. In addition, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines supports the continuation and strengthening of dialogue to resolve the situation in Mali. The holding of the final session of the inclusive national dialogue and the expressed willingness of the signatory movements to the peace agreement to resume meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee are encouraging signs.

MINUSMA's challenges in the north are understandable given the conditions on the ground. We believe that the mobility challenge can be resolved through the deployment of air assets necessary to facilitate operations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will support efforts to that effect.

Before closing, I wish to highlight the consequences of climate change on peace and security in Mali and the subregion. We encourage resilience building and long-term strategies for adaptation in Mali. The international community should also mobilize itself to assist in that regard.

Finally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would like to fully align itself with the joint statement of the three African members of the Security Council delivered by my colleague from the Niger.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express our support for the statement of the representative of France. We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing.

First of all, we would like to express our categorical condemnation of the wave of attacks in the last quarter of last year, which claimed the lives of some 193 Malian soldiers, representing an alarming trend in terms of both frequency and scale. Our heartfelt condolences go to the families of the victims who died in the line of duty, including the 13 French soldiers.

On a positive note, we are encouraged by the progress in the long-awaited inclusive national dialogue as a constructive exercise in empowering all the relevant parties in the peace and reconciliation process. We eagerly await the results of the dialogue, which should reflect the legitimate concerns and recommendations of the people, and the implementation of policies and measures based on its conclusions.

The Dominican Republic has always championed the important role of women in decision-making and internal processes, and we therefore commend the active participation of women's and youth groups in the inclusive national dialogue. We agree with the statement that it is women and young people who pay the highest price in conflicts, and therefore there can be no real discussion on peace and development without their equal participation.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict visited Mali in December to learn about the situation first-hand and to establish a dialogue with the Government, armed groups, civil society and other stakeholders regarding the challenges and opportunities in making progress on that agenda. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the work being done by the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and UNICEF in that regard. We call on the Government of Mali to continue strengthening the legal framework for the protection of children and we hope that the draft law on gender-based violence, as well as the revision of the Child Protection Code, which criminalizes the recruitment and use in hostilities of children under 18 years of age, will be adopted as soon as possible.

More than 1,000 schools remain closed owing to persistent insecurity, which amounts to more than 244,000 children without access to education. We call on the Government of Mali to fulfil its obligations under the Safe Schools Declaration and take action to resume the education of the thousands of affected children and on armed groups to refrain from threatening teachers, attacking schools and using them for military purposes.

As they have concluded the process of the inclusive national dialogue, we urge the parties to focus their attention on the immediate implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, based on the priorities identified in resolution 2480 (2019), which were also part of the conclusions of the dialogue reached by consensus, including the constitutional and institutional reforms; the redeployment of the reconstituted Malian defence and security forces to the northern part of Mali; and the participation of women, who continue to be underrepresented in the mechanisms responsible for implementing and monitoring the Agreement.

We remain very concerned about the persistent critical and complex security situation in central and northern Mali as a result of intercommunal violence and the spread of terrorist groups, which, during every reporting period, claim the lives of hundreds of civilians and threaten to destabilize the entire region. We must pay particular attention to the hopelessness felt by the population, especially young people, and the existing vacuum in the absence of State authority to provide security and justice that are exploited by extremist groups to promote their cause and exercise greater control.

We are encouraged by MINUSMA's efforts, based on the Council's request for the development of a second strategic priority that would allow the Mission to increase its presence in the centre of Mali.

Lastly, we believe that it is important to strengthen outreach initiatives and relations with the relevant parties in Mali in order to better understand the work

and mandate of MINUSMA and the sanctions regime, the sole purpose of which is to contribute to security and the peace and internal reconciliation process.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): On Monday, we all observed a minute of silence for the latest victims whom we and the Niger mourned. I think that we are all aware that they were only the most recent victims in a spiral of violence that we are observing. I would also like to convey, at this stage, my condolences and those of the German Government to the Ambassador of Mali for all the victims in the Malian civilian population and security forces. As one looks at the numbers in Mali, they are a disaster.

In that regard, I would like to turn to my French colleague and once again fully support what he said earlier. Germany is in partnership with friends and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and remains totally committed to bringing security and stability to the region. We support obtaining the desired results, including those related to the economic and social aspect.

In condemning the terrorist attacks, Germany continues to stand side by side with our partners in the G-5 summit, Mali, the Niger and other countries. In our discussions, we must not make the mistake of underestimating the grave threat that we see related to the military aspects of the situation. We need to understand the drivers of violent extremism and we have to recognize that a part of the population, as several colleagues noted earlier, has legitimate grievances that must be addressed.

We need to do everything we can and the authorities in Mali and the G-5 countries need to do everything to establish good governance, fight corruption and impunity, develop the justice system and respect for human rights — as the Ambassador of Dominican Republic highlighted earlier — and implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. As previous speakers said, what is also needed, of course, is the restoration of State institutions to all parts of the country.

We have to protect children, which has two aspects. One aspect is the physical protection of children. Children are the victims of violence and I am sure that my Belgian colleague will say something about this. The other aspect is education. Whenever I hear the number of schools closed, I see that as another indicator that violence will rise. What will children do if they

do not go to school? Therefore, the opening of schools is key.

As the Ambassadors of France, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Dominican Republic said earlier, more has to be done to advance the participation of women, including in Government and the peace process. I welcome the remarks by the Under-Secretary-General and I recognize the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in that regard. Those of us who were in Bamako on our Security Council trip last year still remember, when we looked at the follow-up committee, that its membership was almost entirely made up of men. More has to be done.

Of course, that is only something very personal, but I remember that at a meeting I attended last January (see S/PV.8445), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali was a woman, whereas I see that a male Minister was announced for today's meeting. That is just one indication. I hope that the Foreign Minister is able to listen to our remarks or that they will be conveyed to him.

Lastly, as the Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines very eloquently said earlier, the drivers of violence and problems are related to climate change and security and their effects and more has to be done in that regard to build resilience.

Let me conclude in turning to MINUSMA. As sometimes criticism is voiced with regard to the Mission, at this stage I would like to sincerely recognize what MINUSMA is doing and what the individuals in the Mission are doing. We recognize that, in difficult circumstances, they are doing a good job. MINUSMA alone cannot provide security and can only do so as a partner of the Government in the implementation of the peace agreement.

MINUSMA continues to try to strengthen the Malian Government, such as with regard to the police, but such support should be based on a comprehensive strategic development plan prepared by the Malian authorities, which would then be supported by the Mission.

My United States colleague talked about reforms or proposals for the adaptation of MINUSMA and we will of course study such proposals with great interest. For the time being, MINUSMA has a limited mandate and more also needs to be done to better communicate

its mandate so that there is no unjustified criticism of its work. The Government also has a role to play in that regard. We, as a Council, have to ensure that MINUSMA, whatever its mandate, has adequate means at its disposal — as does the United Nations system in general. In this respect, I also support what Mr. De Rivière said earlier.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): Let me begin by extending our sincere thanks to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his very comprehensive briefing. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and all the personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on the ground.

As stated by the Secretary-General, Mali is one of the most challenging and dangerous operational environments for United Nations peacekeepers. Yet, despite these challenges, MINUSMA continues to show outstanding performance and leadership, which calls for rightfully deserved recognition. Having said that, allow me to share three points.

First, it is important to speed up the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which remains the most viable solution for lasting peace and stability in the country. We welcome the conclusion of the inclusive national dialogue, which resulted in important resolutions, including with regard to legislative elections and constitutional reform. We call on all parties to continue their endeavours aimed at advancing the peace process and key reforms. In addition, we would like to emphasize the importance of redeploying Malian defence and security forces in order to restore State authority, particularly in northern Mali. We also welcome the reintegration of 1,330 former combatants. We hope that any outstanding issues can be resolved, and that the redeployment plan can be adopted. More efforts are also needed to ensure the functioning of local authorities and to address outstanding matters related to the operationalization of the northern development zone.

Secondly, with regard to the addressing security situation, we note with concern the terrorist activities, the proliferation of self-defence militias, intercommunal clashes and the negative sentiment of the population directed towards international forces. Efforts must be made to address the deteriorating security situation. The role of national and international security forces is

critical in this regard. We commend MINUSMA for its role in supporting the peace process and in stabilizing the situation in Centre. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/983), MINUSMA's added focus on central Mali has put additional pressure on the Mission. While the Mission continues to try to adapt and rebalance its capacity, it is necessary to focus on a more sustainable approach.

We concur with the Secretary-General's observation that organizational partners are better placed to conduct counter-terrorism operations beyond the mandate and capability of the Mission. In this regard, it is necessary to enhance effective partnerships. It is regrettable that despite national, multinational and international efforts, the security situation has not been improving. We believe that this is testament to the fact that a military solution alone will not be sufficient to solve the problems Mali is facing.

Accordingly, with regard to my third point, on the need to address root causes of instability, support for the peace process and efforts aimed at improving the security situation will be realized and succeed only if they are translated into an improvement in the living conditions of the Malian population. The alleviation of poverty and food insecurity and the creation of opportunities, including income-generating activities, are therefore critical.

In conclusion, obtaining a national commitment to the Agreement's implementation, restoring State authority and addressing the security and humanitarian situations are of crucial importance to achieving peace, stability and sustainable development in Mali.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing.

Estonia expresses its strong support for the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I would like to focus my statement today on the following points: the need for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the deteriorating security situation, and the importance of accountability.

Full implementation of the peace agreement remains the basis of a successful political process in Mali. It is the main tool for addressing the root causes of the

conflict and helping to restore trust among the people of Mali. A crucial aspect in the implementation process is the full, effective and meaningful participation of women and youth; a lasting solution will not be possible without them.

We welcome the holding of the inclusive national dialogue that was concluded on 22 December. However, the most important part of the process — implementing the conclusions of the national dialogue — needs to start now. Moreover, the process has to support the implementation of the peace agreement. We count on the leadership of the Government of Mali and the political will of all parties to take this process forward.

We are following with great concern the reports of negative trends in the country, especially the further deterioration of the security situation in the centre of the country. The growing number of terrorist attacks on civilians, targeted attacks on military outposts and growing resentment towards the international presence are extremely worrying. Only last week, MINUSMA's base in Kidal was attacked again. These terrorist attacks are simply unacceptable.

We agree that it is important to effectively engage the local community. Its trust and acceptance are crucial for the successful implementation of MINUSMA's mandate and a sustainable transition. We commend MINUSMA for the steps taken so far. However, this remains a key challenge and requires a thorough, integrated approach and enhanced cooperation with relevant actors.

Counter-terrorist efforts in Mali require effective cross-border cooperation among regional and subregional organizations, the States of the region and international actors. It is important that Mali and its neighbouring States take full ownership of the fight against terrorism. We welcome the efforts of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and encourage its further operationalization. Estonia supports the counter-terrorist efforts in the Sahel by contributing to French-led Operation Barkhane. The Estonian parliament recently decided to nearly double our military personnel deployment in the operation.

Finally, allow me to turn to the question of accountability. Parties involved in grave human rights violations and abuses, those fuelling intercommunal tensions, and perpetrators of crimes against civilians and peacekeepers must be brought to justice. A continuous and principled fight against impunity will

not only hold the perpetrators accountable, but is also a powerful tool in building trust and bridging a way to lasting peace.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to welcome the participation by video-teleconference of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali. Allow me also to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing and, through him, all the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We welcome their commitment to peace and stability in Mali.

Again, in recent months, many civilians and soldiers have died in Mali. Partner and friendly nations of Mali have also lost troops in the service of peace. On behalf of Belgium, I would like to express our condolences and solidarity with them.

Some positive developments in Mali are to be welcomed, including the holding of the inclusive national dialogue, which was open to all, a decrease in intercommunity violence in Centre, thanks in particular to the efforts of the Government and of MINUSMA, timid progress towards the redeployment of reconstituted units to Kidal and signals in the fight against corruption. I also commend the work of the International Commission of Inquiry for Mali. The final report will be presented in June. It will be imperative to follow up and initiate criminal proceedings without delay.

The next resumption of the meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee has been announced. That is good news. We expect the parties to demonstrate maturity and responsibility in the search for compromise. A resolution to the question of Kidal will be an important step.

Despite everything, it is clear that Mali has been slow to emerge from the crisis. In addition to the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, we expect progress on all the priority actions mentioned in resolution 2480 (2019). I recall that resolution 2480 (2019) is clear in affirming that the authors of delaying tactics are liable to sanctions.

In recent months, we have observed a rise in criticism of MINUSMA, the French forces and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Discontent seems to be growing among the people, who denounce

not only the presence of foreign forces but also the absence, ineffectiveness or even illegitimacy of State services. We must rise to meet this challenge. It is the very credibility of our action which is at stake, and as we know, it is above all a boon for the enemies of peace.

We already know the answers. We must protect the populations throughout Malian territory; listen to them; offer a desirable future to Malian youth, starting with an education and jobs of quality; assure the provision of basic services to all Malians; and act in favour of justice and against impunity for the perpetrators of crimes. In other words, in addition to the indispensable military response in the immediate future, there is an urgent need to deepen Malian democracy in order to put a brake on the growing attraction of the social model advocated by the jihadists. In this respect, political and administrative decentralization constitutes a priority project.

MINUSMA remains the most dangerous peacekeeping operation in the world. We thank the Secretary-General for his candid comments, including on the effectiveness of the Mission. MINUSMA's mandate is clear. To protect civilians, MINUSMA can adopt an offensive stance and anticipate threats. The project of a more mobile, agile and flexible Mission has our full support. Let us now give it the means to achieve that.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about the visit of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to Mali, which I led in my capacity as Chairman of the Working Group. The Working Group visited Mali from 8 to 11 December 2019. Several members of the Working Group joined the visit. We had meetings in Bamako and Mopti with several national and international interlocutors. It was a productive visit, with a rich programme co-organized by MINUSMA, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. I thank them for their work. The main issues we discussed included the problem of schools closed due to the conflict, the granting of birth certificates, the adoption of the draft revised child protection code and the signing of an action plan by the Platform coalition of armed groups.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and welcome Foreign Minister Dramé, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference.

We condemn the attack on a camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on 9 January and wish the wounded a speedy recovery.

The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2019/983) points to the continued complexity and fragility of Mali's security situation, grave violence within and between communities and a dire humanitarian situation. The security and economic situation in northern and central Mali is a cause for concern, while terrorist forces are threatening regional security. The Government of Mali and the parties concerned must take action to resolve the aforementioned issues.

First, the Government of Mali must play an effective role and resolve differences peacefully in full consultation with all parties in Mali in order to promote the peace process and stay jointly committed to national peace and development. As observed in the Secretary-General's report, accelerating the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is the only viable path to lasting peace and stability in the country, which will require the sustained and intensified efforts of the Malian Government.

Secondly, the Government of Mali must enhance regional cooperation so as to respond to cross-border terrorist operations through holistic means. The security dynamics in Mali and the surrounding Sahel region have posed challenges to the implementation of the peace agreement. The Government of Mali must truly and effectively assume its primary responsibilities of protecting its own territory and people, enhance its security and counter-terrorism capacities, and gradually take charge of its own security in order to maintain stability in northern and central Mali.

Thirdly, the Government of Mali needs to consolidate its economic bases, improve the livelihoods of its people and make great efforts to achieve independent and sustainable development so as to promote peace through development. The Government should increase its input in northern and central Mali so that local people can enjoy the peace dividend at an early date.

MINUSMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General have played an important role in keeping Mali stable, enhancing its security capacities and supporting and facilitating its peace process, which is crucial to security and stability in Mali and the Sahel region. MINUSMA is one of the most dangerous

peacekeeping missions of the United Nations. We encourage the Government to fully collaborate with the Mission and coordinate with its continuous efforts to enhance the safety and security of its peacekeepers.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing.

Like others, I would like to begin by offering my condolences and those of the British people for the loss of life we have seen in recent attacks in Mali and the wider Sahel. I am thinking particularly of last Thursday's terrible attack in the Niger, which was an especially shocking reminder of the cost of instability in the region, but also of attacks against the personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which we condemn, including the 9 January attack on MINUSMA forces in Tessalit. I join the German Ambassador in offering condolences for the lives lost by Malian forces, as well as civilians, of course.

Those developments are a testament to the urgent need for the international community and the Government of Mali to work together to help achieve long-term peace and stability in the country and the region. It is worth reflecting on where we stand with the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which was signed in 2015 and is now reaching its fifth year. Over those five years, we have yet to see its full implementation. Meanwhile, MINUSMA is losing troops and the situation in the region continues to worsen. It is extremely concerning that we have seen only limited progress towards the implementation of the peace agreement. The Ambassador of the Niger said that the parties needed to speed up. I unequivocally echo that call, which a number of us have been making for some time.

We welcome recent developments, including the inclusive national dialogue and the deployment of reconstituted forces by the Government of Mali to the north. We also welcome the announcement of a high-level workshop to increase the participation of women in the peace process.

Overall, however, I agree with my American colleague that benchmarks set by the Council must be met and that failure by the political actors to act for peace will have to lead to consequences, including sanctions. In particular, we need to see the transfer of key services and competencies to regional leaders, as well as the operationalization of the northern development zone.

I agree with all of those who have talked about the importance of the meaningful participation of women in the peace process.

The dynamics in the centre of the country are a cause of significant concern. I would like to welcome the Prime Minister's appointment of a High Representative to better coordinate efforts there but we now need to see action. As the Ambassador of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reminded us, we cannot have security without development and services — just as we cannot have development without security.

We therefore need a comprehensive, politically-led strategy, coordinated across all sectors, to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence, re-establish basic social services and allow for effective justice and reconciliation. We know that those things are easier said than done. It is a complicated and difficult undertaking, but the implementation of the peace agreement must happen and it must happen more quickly.

Turning to MINUSMA, I want to echo the tributes paid by others to MINUSMA and its troops and the hard and difficult work they do. I would also like to say that we very much commend MINUSMA's plans and efforts to adopt a more mobile, flexible and agile posture, with high-end capabilities, to enable them to more effectively carry out their mandated tasks. We look forward to discussing those issues in more detail.

I would just say as well that the United Kingdom's planned deployment of 250 troops to the Mission is testament to the important role that we believe MINUSMA and the region play. In that context, I would like to echo Under-Secretary-General Lacroix's call for a swift resolution of the land issues that are hampering deployment.

We should not have to underline again around the table the urgency of action to address the drivers of conflict in Mali and the broader Sahel. The United Kingdom is ready to play its part alongside others, through diplomacy, security support, humanitarian aid and development assistance. However, it is only with inclusive, effective Malian political leadership that those international efforts can deliver stability.

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

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his insightful briefing.

I share the concerns of the Secretary-General about the continued delays in the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It is also our particular concern that the security situation in northern and central Mali continues to deteriorate due to intercommunal violence, armed conflict and terrorist armed groups' operations. We condemn the recent terrorist attacks against the Malian security forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We pay tribute to peacekeepers and members of the Malian armed forces who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of the peace and security of the Malian people.

In the light of the findings and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/983), the letter on the situation in Mali and the work of MINUSMA, my delegation wishes to make the following observations.

First, we are of the view that implementing the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation should continue to be the key strategy for sustaining peace and security in Mali. In that vein, we welcome the conclusion of the inclusive national dialogue sessions held in November and December 2019. National ownership and the full participation of the parties concerned in the inclusive national dialogue in Mali should be encouraged so that all differences can be bridged. We also note efforts to push forward the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in northern Mali.

Secondly, we urge relevant parties to uphold their responsibilities to protect civilians in armed conflict, especially women and children. It is also necessary to increase the participation of women and youth in political and economic decision-making processes in Mali.

Thirdly, we support the activities of MINUSMA. We welcome international efforts to sustain peace in Mali and support the role of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States in making a contribution to peacekeeping, security and sustainable development in Mali.

Lastly, we call on all regional and international partners to speed up the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its support plan. We welcome cooperation between France and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, reinforced at the Pau summit in France on 13 January, with the aim of protecting civilians and preventing the terrorist threat

from spreading into bordering countries, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Dramé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Mali, I would like to very warmly congratulate Viet Nam on assuming the presidency of the Security Council.

I would like to warmly congratulate the delegation of the United States of America, led by Ambassador Kelly Craft, for the remarkable work done at the helm of the Council last month.

On behalf of the delegation of Mali, I take this opportunity to congratulate the new members of the Council — Estonia, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam. In the same vein, I commend the important contribution made by the outgoing members — Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru and Poland — to international peace and security.

I would also like to thank all members of the Security Council, the countries that contribute troops and personnel to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Algeria, in its capacity as President of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, for their invaluable support to Mali at this most complex and difficult time in its history.

I cannot end my thanks without reiterating the profound debt of gratitude the President of the Republic of Mali and the Government and the people of Mali owe to Secretary-General António Guterres for his steadfast commitment to peace, security and development in Mali and the Sahel, which he demonstrated by attending the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel)-France summit in Pau, less than 48 hours ago.

First, the Government of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/983). I thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his briefing.

Secondly, we also take note of the comments and high expectations of Council members.

On behalf of the Government of Mali, I would like to make a few remarks and to highlight, in particular, the most recent developments in Mali since the publication of the Secretary-General's report. Let me begin by reassuring the Council that today, more than ever before, the Government of the Republic of Mali remains very committed to the diligent implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Admittedly, the work of the Agreement Monitoring Committee has been suspended for some time, but I can inform the Council that the Committee will meet in Bamako on 19 January.

In addition, during that period, the movements that signed the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the Government of Mali continued to talk during a productive inter-Malian dialogue and to consult each other. It is not an exaggeration to say that, at the end of that period, the Malian parties once again reached agreement on the key issues pertaining to the implementation of the Agreement. It is that inter-Malian dialogue that has enabled the significant steps forward that are on the agenda of the next meeting of the Agreement's monitoring committee, to be held at the end of this week.

That productive inter-Malian dialogue also enabled the participation of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and Platform coalition of armed groups in the inclusive national dialogue. Their participation has been the key to the success of the dialogue, which has been welcomed in Mali, by our immediate neighbours in Africa and by the world. The participation of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, which had suspended its contribution to the preparatory work, is the result of contact being maintained, despite the suspension, throughout the period from August onward. I can assure you that today, all the Malian parties are committed to taking the last important steps towards the implementation of the Agreement.

From Sunday onward, we will enter a period of accelerated implementation of the Agreement, thanks to the inter-Malian dialogue, which benefited from the contribution of the entire international community, and to MINUSMA. I welcome the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his staff in helping to bring the Malian parties together outside the Agreement's monitoring committee.

The national dialogue was a complete success, with the participation of trade unions and employers'

organizations and of youth and women's associations, and its outcomes were adopted on 22 December 2019. Among the recommendations and outcomes, it was decided to place particular emphasis on four, which, it should be recalled, are intended to speed up the implementation of the Agreement.

The first resolution concerns the holding of parliamentary elections on the basis of the current electoral constituencies. Needless to say, there is a strong commitment on the part of the country's stakeholders to launch a process of territorial reorganization and to draw new administrative and electoral boundaries with a view to further the representation in parliament of all the country's components.

The second resolution concerns the holding of a referendum and the review of the Constitution of 25 February 1992 involving all stakeholders. The organization of legislative elections and the holding of a constitutional referendum will create the conditions for speeding up the political and institutional reforms needed to establish a National Assembly that is representative of Mali's national diversity.

The third resolution concerns the immediate, countrywide deployment of the reconstituted defence and security forces and the adoption of legislation in the course of 2020 on the role of traditional leaders and powers and of religious authorities in conflict prevention and management.

The fourth resolution concerns the review of certain provisions of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali that emerged from the process, in accordance with the mechanisms provided for in article 65 of the Agreement.

Although concerns had been raised about the manner in which the Agreement would be discussed, the fact that the inclusive national dialogue had discussed it did not sabotage the process. On the contrary, it gave new legitimacy to the Agreement and to the commitment of the Malian parties — hence the recommendation to review certain mechanisms to facilitate its implementation. All those issues had already been discussed during the inter-Malian exchanges that preceded the national dialogue.

As I have said, the national dialogue was an important moment in the life of the nation, when a genuine national consensus was forged through active solidarity. By enabling all national stakeholders,

including the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform, to actively participate in open discussions on the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the means of enriching that precious instrument for the restoration of peace in Mali, the national dialogue has changed the Agreement from a bilateral instrument between the Mouvements and the Government to a popular national issue.

For his part, the President of the Republic of Mali undertook to do everything in his power to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations stemming from the national dialogue are implemented in keeping with the laws in force. A follow-up mechanism will be set up shortly.

On the question of the redeployment of defence and security forces, I am pleased to inform the Council of the tangible progress that has been made. A technical committee on security met at the end of November and drew up a plan for the deployment of several battalions in the northern regions of the country. In other words, the signatory parties — the Government parties and the military leaders — with the encouragement of the international community, especially MINUSMA, have reached agreement on a deployment plan that will be endorsed next Sunday at the meeting of the Agreement's monitoring committee.

From that moment on, the way will be paved for the deployment of at least 1,330 former combatants from the signatory armed groups, through the mechanism known as Operational Coordination Mechanism, in the four northern regions. The plan is to deploy a company to Ménaka and a battalion each to Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal.

Similarly, confirming the Government's determination to honour the commitments contained in the Agreement, the President signed a decree on 12 December 2019 to appoint, on an exceptional basis, approximately 100 former combatants from the signatory armed groups to various officer ranks in the Malian army. That is not an effective return to the forces of so-called former FAMAs, or those who at one point in the country's history left the national army, but they have come back and are today working in the same uniforms, under the same flag as their brothers-in-arms.

I believe that there are significant advances taking place on the ground in Mali today and that it was my duty to bring them to the attention of your august Council. Security sector reform is under way and is

being strengthened with the adoption of an action plan by the National Council for Security Sector Reform, which is attached to the Prime Minister and Head of Government. With regard to the tensions among signatory parties to the Agreement in the region and around the town of Ménaka, I am pleased to announce that a positive outcome among them was reached.

Turning to the development issues in the northern regions of Mali, I am also pleased to note the very significant progress made in the promulgation of all the texts constituting the legal and institutional framework of the northern development zone in Mali and the establishment of the Sustainable Development Fund, which is the financial instrument responsible for implementing the development strategy for the northern regions, to which the Government contributed \$72 million in 2019. For the fiscal year 2020, \$44 million has been earmarked. These financial efforts of the State further illustrate the Government's willingness to expedite the implementation of the Agreement. At the joint initiative of the Government and the signatories, a pilot project will soon be launched in the northern regions of the country.

In terms of national reconciliation, I can assure Council members that an important step has also been taken. The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has to date registered 16,000 depositions from victims through its regional offices, and public hearings began on 8 December 2019. The mandate of the Commission has been extended until 31 December 2021 and now covers all incidents that occurred in Mali from 1960 to 2019.

The law of national understanding, promulgated in July 2019 exonerates persons who committed or were accomplices to crimes in the context of the painful events that occurred in Mali from January 2012, in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference of National Understanding. However, the law does not constitute a guarantee of impunity. On the contrary, the law of national understanding specifically excludes war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape and crimes not subject to a statute of limitations. Notwithstanding real progress on the implementation of the Agreement, the Malian parties must again redouble their commitments and efforts so as to enable the Malian people to fully enjoy the dividends of peace.

The remarks made by Council members today have been heard. Their concerns and observations will drive

us to step up our determination to make progress in the implementation of the Agreement. Myriad immense challenges persist, in particular the deterioration of the security environment, especially in central Mali, intercommunal tensions and the lack of financial resources, namely, pledges made by partners.

The situation in the regions of central Mali remains a source of major concern for the Government. The tragic events of the night of 30 September to 1 October 2019 in Mondoro and Boulékéssi and the terrorist attack of 18 November 2019 in Indelimane, in the Ménaka region, remind us that our adversaries — terrorist groups, drug traffickers and other types of traffickers — are determined to destabilize Mali, its neighbouring countries and the region as a whole. Worse still, in addition to sowing terror in our shared space on a daily basis, these forces of evil are exploiting our populations, pitting one group against another. The factions created and manipulated by these criminal groups stoke intercommunal violence, which has unfortunately so afflicted our country, as well as our neighbours.

The Government is fully aware of the complexity of the situation in central Mali, which is why it has opted for a comprehensive approach by adopting an integrated security plan for the central regions and developing a consultation framework to politically manage the political issues of Centre. The Head of State recently appointed a high representative for this purpose. Multifaceted efforts are under way today to attenuate tensions in a perceptible way in the region. The arrangement provides for political measures, including dialogue among communities, the strengthening of the security apparatus to protect people and their property, and providing peace dividends for the people.

In addition to devising an integrated security plan for the Centre region, the Prime Minister has made a number of visits to Centre, and the results are very encouraging. This week, the High Islamic Council of Mali is organizing an important forum on issues relating to religion in the centre of the country. The ulemas of Mali will have the opportunity to discuss their views on the practices of Islam and the abuses that have caused such pain in the centre of our country.

With regard to the human rights situation, I would like to emphasize the Malian Government's resolve to respect and ensure respect for human rights and to fight impunity. The four cases of human rights

violations mentioned in the Secretary-General's report and attributed to the Malian defence and security forces will be investigated and subject to administrative and disciplinary measures when responsibility is assigned. Similarly, the Government is aware of its primary responsibility to protect civilians, which is why it will continue to deploy the efforts needed to ensure the security of people and their property throughout the territory. It is also the reason why, following the violence that Centre experienced during the first half of last year, several alleged perpetrators of violent acts were arrested and are now in the hands of the courts to answer for their actions. It is true, however, that the security situation, the lack of competent public services in some towns and expertise deficiencies in certain fields do not favour the rapid conclusion of any open procedures.

Shouldering its full responsibility for managing the humanitarian crisis, the Government of Mali is working tirelessly and in good faith to ensure the diligent and inclusive implementation of the relevant provisions of the Agreement, which provide for, *inter alia*, a framework for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their places of origin. The Government is also continuing its actions and programmes aimed at providing those affected with an improved quality of life, notably through the provision of basic social services, in accordance with the national humanitarian action policy and our action plan for the period 2016-2020.

The difficulties that the population is currently facing are unfortunately being used by those acting in bad faith, which sparked the protests that led to the pillaging of the MINUSMA camp on 12 October 2019 in Sévaré. Similarly, a few days ago, in Bandiagara, there were demonstrations against the presence of United Nations forces. Every time such incidents have occurred, the Government has unambiguously and fully assumed all of its responsibilities, not only by condemning them but also by inviting Malian public opinion not to confuse our friends with our enemies, or confuse the international forces that are in our country at our request and with our approval — at our insistence — with those who are calling for their departure in order to bring about the ruin of our country and institutions.

There is no ambiguity in the position of the Malian Government in this regard every time there

is an incident. We will continue to raise awareness among our people on the ground so that the abuses that arise from time to time remain exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, when looking at the way that people in Bamako and elsewhere act with regard to those who are calling for protest against international forces, we realize that the majority of the Malian people are grateful for the efforts of the international community and the international forces that have come to help us at our request.

Such acknowledgement is something that the Government of Mali would like to reiterate to members of the Council today. We express our deep gratitude for the efforts that the international community undertaken from the outbreak of the Malian crisis until today. That is why we have increased our contact with those in charge of MINUSMA at all levels so as to reassure the MINUSMA forces, personnel and leadership of our solidarity with them at all times and of our gratitude and that of the Malian people.

What some call an anti-international force sentiment is not widespread in Mali. It is only from a minority. The Malian people, in general, continue to acknowledge and appreciate the support of international forces and their efforts on behalf of their Malian brothers in arms. We say that to the Malian people every day. I had the opportunity to say it only a few days ago to MINUSMA when, following demonstrations on the Dogon Plateau in Bandiagara, I went to the MINUSMA premises to say that MINUSMA is us. MINUSMA is made up of people from Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal and the Niger and our friends from outside Africa who decided to send their children to us because we are in difficulty. I ask the Council to believe that this message of resolve and reason from the Government of the Republic of Mali is well understood by the Malian people and by Malian public opinion. That enables the President of the Republic to say and reiterate to the diplomatic corps, particularly when they present their credentials, and to traditional authorities and civil society that Mali will be eternally grateful to the international community.

The regional dimension of the Malian crisis represents another, and not insignificant, challenge to the implementation of the Agreement. That is at the heart of the commitment of the States members of the G-5 Sahel to stabilizing the region. As I was saying earlier, the increase in terrorist attacks in recent weeks in the Sahel region, particularly in the tri-border region

of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, highlights the urgent need for the international community to step up its efforts at our side in order to ensure that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has the necessary human, material and financial resources to implement its mandate.

As Council members can imagine, Mali welcomes the conclusions of the Pau summit, held between the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel and the President of the French Republic, in particular the common commitment to combating active terrorist groups operating in the area by immediately focusing military efforts in the tri-border region under the joint command of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and Operation Barkhane, targeting, as a priority, Islamic State in Greater Sahara, a branch of Da'esh, or Islamic State; the training of national armies, with particular emphasis on sharing intelligence with foreign forces; the restoration of State authority throughout the Sahel countries, particularly in the Kidal region; and working in partnership for the development of the Sahel.

I welcome the decision of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, our subregional organization, to strengthen support for the fight against terrorism in the region.

In conclusion, I wish to commend the remarkable work being done on the ground by the women and men of MINUSMA under the able leadership of Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, whose good offices, constantly provided to us, have enabled Mali to make progress towards national consensus. The good offices of Ambassador Annadif made it possible to engage in a political dialogue that led to what is known as the political agreement on governance, signed on 2 May 2019. That resulted in the formation of an inclusive Government, making it possible to significantly ease political and social tensions in the country in a meaningful and verifiable manner. We hope that the Head of MINUSMA, Mr. Annadif, continues to provide his good offices so that Mali and the Malian people can regain the consensus without which it will not be possible to achieve the national unity to enable our country to overcome the challenges and ward off threats.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the victims of the Malian crisis, civilian and military, foreign and Malian alike, all of whom fell for the freedom of Mali. I reiterate the gratitude of the President of the Republic, the Government and

the entire people to the French Barkhane force, to the troop-contributing countries of MINUSMA and to all multilateral and bilateral partners for their unwavering support towards a long-term and definitive settlement of the Malian crisis.

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 11.55 a.m.