



# Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

**8765**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 8 October 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Nebenzia . . . . . (Russian Federation)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mr. Kridelka
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Djani
Niger . . . . .	Mr. Aougi
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. DeShong
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Matjila
Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ben Lagha
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Craft
Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2020/952)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Return to the Security Council Chamber**

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): Before we adopt the agenda for today's meeting, I would like to congratulate all members on returning to the Security Council Chamber. The last meeting we held in the Chamber was under the Chinese presidency in March (see S/PV.8745). I want to thank all members for supporting the decision for us to return to the Security Council Chamber. The Economic and Social Council Chamber was very hospitable, but we needed to return to our home, and we have done that today. I want to thank the Secretariat for its support for our joint decision.

I wish to say that, while we have set up plastic dividers, our health and safety depend first and foremost on us. We should act responsibly. For example, just before this meeting, I underwent a test for the coronavirus disease. I am pleased to say that it was negative. I would urge members to undergo such a test as often as possible for their own safety and for that of everyone in the Chamber.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Mali**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2020/952)**

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): 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 Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Annadif is joining today's 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/2020/952, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annadif.

**Mr. Annadif**: It is always an honour for me to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2020/952), especially at a time when the country is going through a critical moment in its history.

The period from June to mid-September covered by the report was marked by significant sociopolitical developments. During my virtual meeting with the Council on 27 July, I noted the main causes of the current crisis being as follows: first, the weakening of central institutions, the loss of confidence in political actors and the rise of religious leaders; secondly, the delay in the implementation of the Agreement of Peace and Reconciliation and the worsening socioeconomic situation; and, thirdly, the deterioration of the security situation, in particular in the centre of the country, which has led to human rights violations that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) often documents, transmitting recommendations to the Government, but which unfortunately do not lead to concrete action.

The situation led to a paralysis in Mali's institutions, notably the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly. It was in this context of deadlock that the mutiny of 18 August led to the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. The coup de force was condemned by the entire international community, including the Secretary-General and the Security Council. In addition to condemning this unconstitutional change, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to suspend Mali from all of its institutions and declared sanctions, including the closure of borders, an air embargo and the suspension of financial transactions until a civil transition were put in place.

Since then, days of national consultations were organized from 10 to 12 September and led to the adoption of a transition charter, which complements the current Constitution. As provided for in the charter, a President of the Transition has been appointed in the person of Bah N'Daou, a retired Colonel Major and former Minister of Defence. The head of the junta, Colonel Assimi Goïta, has been appointed Vice-President of the Transition in charge of defence

and security. Both were sworn in on 25 August before the Supreme Court. A Prime Minister was appointed on 27 September by the President of the Transition in the person of Moctar Ouane, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, in accordance with the transition charter.

*(spoke in French)*

In his speech on the occasion of his swearing in, on 25 September, President Bah N'Daw listed a number of priorities that he hoped to be achieved during the transition, which he hopes will be smooth.

Those priorities include, first, strengthening the capacities of the Malian Defence and Security Forces in terms of equipment and training.

The second priority is the fight against impunity, which he expressed with the now famous phrase: "I cannot guarantee that there will be zero corruption, but I commit to ensuring that there is zero impunity."

The third priority is to organize free and transparent elections, which will be key to the return to constitutional order in the country.

The fourth priority is the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which resulted from the Algiers process.

The Government, which was formed on 5 October, is made up of 25 members, in accordance with the recommendations of the inclusive national dialogue, of which four are women — equivalent to 16 per cent of the Government, unfortunately far below the 30 per cent quota required by law — and 21 are men, including four members of the military.

I am pleased to report to the Council that it is the first time since the signing of the Agreement, in June 2015, that the signatory movements have officially entered the Government in Mali. This progress is highly symbolic and significant. It is the result of the openness of the new authorities and signatory movements, who were encouraged by our good offices in order to build trust. Thanks to this trust, the Peace Agreement is included in the preamble to the charter, and its implementation is enshrined as one of the Government's tasks. Therefore, it is with genuine relief that the people of Mali and neighbouring countries, including ourselves, have welcomed the lifting of the ECOWAS sanctions following the statement of the interim President on 5 October.

As members will have noted, the year 2020 in Mali has been marked by much tumult and political uncertainties. The country was without a Government for more than four months, and the challenges have multiplied, particularly with the coronavirus disease pandemic and its socioeconomic impact. This situation has also led to a considerable delay in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and has aggravated the humanitarian crisis, which was already latent.

However, MINUSMA, as well as the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, remained committed throughout this period and continued their activities, including support for the strategy for the stabilization of central Mali.

Similarly, as part of its adaptation plan, MINUSMA has continued its patrols and the installation of its temporary bases in the interest of protecting civilians and supporting the Malian security and defence forces. This is how Operation Seka facilitated the return of Malian armed forces to Labbezanga, in the Gao region bordering the Republic of the Niger.

With the formation of the new Government and the lifting of sanctions, we can now hope for the swift establishment of the national transitional council, which will serve as the legislative body throughout the 18-month transitional period.

Indeed, the holding credible elections that can lead to a return to constitutional order depends on political, institutional, electoral and administrative reforms as set out in the transition charter. From this point of view, the transition constitutes an opportunity for Malian women and men to bring their country from this infernal cycle punctuated by a regular succession of coups d'état.

The United Nations must also seize this opportunity to continue supporting and assisting throughout this important phase for a way out of the crisis in Mali, in coordination with the entire international community, in particular the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

The success of the transition is therefore within reach. The ball remains in the court of Malian women and men. They must mount a surge at the national level. For its part, MINUSMA is more engaged than ever by their side.

**The President** *(spoke in Russian)*: I thank Mr. Annadif for his 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 want to thank Special Representative Annadif for his briefing and for his work as Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). I also commend the work of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, which mobilized efforts from within hours of the onset of the political crisis in Mali.

France welcomes the transition in Mali. The authorities in charge of the process have been appointed, and we wish them every success. A transition charter has been published. France welcomes the release of individuals detained since 18 August. And, lastly, we welcome the lifting of sanctions by ECOWAS and we would endorse its call for the dissolution of the Comité national pour le salut du peuple.

This transition must lead to the holding of open, free and fair elections within the next 18 months and the re-establishment of constitutional order. France urges the new authorities to use this period to lay the groundwork for constitutional reforms to build a stronger and more legitimate democracy in accordance with the expectations expressed by the Malian people. It is crucial that the process include all of the stakeholders, including women and young people, in accordance with resolution 2531 (2020).

I want to highlight three priorities for the months ahead.

First, we must continue our fight against terrorism. The new momentum begun in January, following the Pau summit, our partners in the Sahel have made gains in a number of areas. Despite events in Bamako, the Malian army has stayed the course. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is ever-more self-sufficient and effective. It still needs support. Terrorist groups know how to adapt. Humanitarian assistance and development activities must support security achievements in the spirit of the integrated approach supported by the coalition for the Sahel. France welcomes the involvement of the European Union and its member States.

Secondly, the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation In Mali must resume without further delay. Following progress early in the year,

the process has been at a standstill since June. France would like to reiterate that there is no alternative to this Agreement for a long-term reconciliation among the Malian people.

When renewing the MINUSMA mandate, the Security Council identified priority actions for the reintegration of former rebels into the national armed forces; institutional reform; the development of the northern regions; and the participation of women. This road map is clear, and the Malian people must seize the opportunity of having MINUSMA at the ready to help in these tasks. The participation of the signatory groups to the Agreement in the transitional Government is an encouraging sign in that regard.

Finally, the third priority is stabilization in the centre of Mali. It is essential that international humanitarian law be respected by all concerned, and that the transitional authorities work to establish a framework for dialogue, reconciliation, the fight against impunity and respect for human rights. France notes the opening of an investigation into the violence of recent months and urges the authorities to complete it in an impartial and independent manner so as to bring those responsible to justice.

In support of those efforts, MINUSMA continues its protection of civilian work. But to fully achieve those goals, MINUSMA's adaptation plan must be implemented, including through the provision further helicopters. I call on Members States to meet these urgent needs.

In this decisive period, we must reaffirm our support for MINUSMA and for the priorities that we have entrusted to it. It is also important to explicitly encourage it to support the transition. At the end of this meeting, France will propose a draft presidential statement reflecting these points.

**Mr. Aougi** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council, namely, South Africa, Tunisia and the Niger, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and thank him for his briefing and his unwavering commitment to the stabilization of the situation in Mali.

The deteriorating sociopolitical situation in Mali following the protests that led to the events of 18 August with the change in constitutional order are cause for concern for our countries. In the light of the negative impact that these developments could have on the stability and social, economic and security situations in Mali, and specifically on the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions.

Today we are happy to note the progress achieved towards normalization in Mali, including the publication of a transition charter, taking account of the decisions of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS regarding the progressive return to constitutional order in the country. These positive developments allowed for ECOWAS sanctions to be lifted.

Nevertheless, important tasks await the transition, namely, the fight against terrorism, the restoration of peace and security throughout the country, institutional reforms conducive to restoring social peace in the country and the full operationalization of the Northern Development Zone.

The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains the best framework for these necessary and urgent institutional reforms and these priority tasks. Its implementation must be a priority. Continuing to implement the strategy for the stabilization of central Mali is also vitally important if the challenges in central Mali are to be overcome. To that end, we call on all Malian political stakeholders to resolutely commit to a genuine and inclusive dialogue within the framework of the agreement and the ECOWAS process in order to comprehensively address the challenges that Mali is currently facing.

The A3+1 commends the ECOWAS communiqué of 5 October 2020. It expresses its full support to Mali and calls upon Mali's various stakeholders to support the new Malian civil authorities and to restore State control and authority across the nation and ensure the resumption of the provision of vital social services.

We commend the continued efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in the implementation of those priorities as enshrined in resolution 2531 (2020), including its contribution to reconciliation and social cohesion in both central and northern Mali. Its vital support, which allowed for the redeployment of

the new, reconstituted Malian Defence and Security Forces, must be commended despite the challenges that remain to be met.

In that respect, in order to build on the progress already made, it is vital that we step up our efforts to resolve all remaining challenges so that the reconstituted and redeployed units can play their role and contribute more effectively to security in northern Mali, including in Kidal, and to facilitating the return of State authority in those regions.

In the same vein, the A3+1 commends the commitment and mediation efforts made by ECOWAS over recent months. This reflects its ownership and its leadership in the process of the peaceful resolution of the multidimensional crises that have the region in their grip. We encourage ECOWAS to continue to support the Malian people in the implementation of the road map in coming months. The quest for peace and stability in Mali requires that ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations must work closely together and pool their efforts to achieve lasting peace. The maintenance of peace, security and stability in Mali is vital to bringing about peace, security and calm throughout West Africa and beyond.

Because the events of 18 August in Bamako are not new to the Malian people, there is a need to review the Malian political and governance model and the manner in which international development partners operate in the country. Development plans and programmes must be people-centred and foster inclusive participation and full ownership on the part of the Malian people. To that end, the Malian people must be the principal actors in restoring stability in their country.

In terms of security, Mali and the Sahel remain vulnerable to the atrocities of terrorism. Violent extremism, intercommunal violence and organized transnational crime require greater attention. We remain worried by the continued attacks on civilians, MINUSMA peacekeepers and the Malian forces, and we condemn them. We reaffirm that the perpetrators of those heinous crimes must be brought to justice.

We will continue to reaffirm that peace is a global public good. The threats to security in Mali and in the Sahel are spilling over borders and can have catastrophic repercussions on the rest of the African continent and the world as a whole. The efforts of the Sahelian States must be supported appropriately,

both bilaterally and multilaterally, especially in their collective undertakings.

The Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force has made it possible to carry out several large-scale operations since its creation in 2017, in keeping with its mandate. In order to be more broad-based and decisive, its efforts require predictable and sustained support.

The A3+1 commends the international community's support, in particular that of MINUSMA, for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We are encouraged by the progress made within the framework of resolution 2531 (2020) on improving support for the Joint Force. That will have an immediate operational impact on the Force.

However, given the provisions of resolution 2491 (2019), which specifically state that support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force must not interfere in MINUSMA's performance, and given the recent sociopolitical and security in Mali, which requires that MINUSMA redouble its efforts and focus on the core tasks of its mandate in order to achieve its strategic priorities, we believe that it is high time for robust support to be extended to the Joint Force through a dedicated support office, as has been suggested by the Secretary-General on numerous occasions.

In conclusion, the humanitarian situation in Mali and the Sahel remains of grave concern. The consequences of the coronavirus disease, flooding and food insecurity, which have increased at an alarming pace, require urgent funding of the humanitarian response plan for 2020. As of 31 August, only 35 per cent of the \$474 million needed for its implementation had been received.

In order to tackle sustainably the many challenges facing the region, we must adopt a holistic approach to address the immediate challenges facing Mali and the region in general, namely in the areas of development, poverty and unemployment.

Against that backdrop, we call on Mali's international partners to step up their efforts to support Mali at this particularly delicate stage for the country in order to contribute to stabilizing the country and ensure its transition towards a fully stable and prosperous democracy.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif for his briefing.

I listened attentively to the remarks made by other members of the Security Council, especially the representative of the Niger on behalf of the African members of the Council and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I think that many of their views merit our high-level attention.

The recent situation in Mali has triggered widespread attention on the part of the international community. China has been following closely the recent developments in Mali. We are pleased to note that the President and Vice-President of the transitional Government have been sworn in and that the Prime Minister has been appointed. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) issued a communiqué on 5 October on its decision to lift the sanctions on Mali. We welcome these positive developments and commend the efforts of the Malian stakeholders and ECOWAS on their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

That said, in order to restore peace and stability in Mali, many challenges remain. The implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is stalled. In central and northern Mali, the security and humanitarian situation have deteriorated, compounded by new and complex factors related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It is our sincere hope that all parties in Mali will put the interests of the country and the people first, remain on the track of dialogue and cooperation and build on the positive momentum, so as to form the transitional government without delay and advance the transition in a steady manner.

As to the focus for the next steps, we believe that it is important to continue to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Since the agreement was signed, in 2015, considerable progress has been achieved thanks to the efforts of all Malian stakeholders. However, much remains to be done. We urge the transitional Government and Malian stakeholders to renew their commitments to the agreement and to advance its implementation in conjunction with the transitional process through, inter alia, institutional reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and the consolidation of State authority.

Fighting terrorism is another priority. The Secretary-General's report (S/2020/952) points

to the increased frequency of terrorist activities, with terrorist organizations capitalizing on current fragilities, thus aggravating the security situation in northern and central Mali. Those trends are cause for heightened vigilance.

We encourage the transitional Government to work more closely with the international community and employ all the means available to fight terrorism and violent extremism. China endorses the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) through its continued support of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel within the parameters of its mandate.

Sustainable development must continue to move forward in order to eliminate the root causes of instability. Just now, the representative of the Niger stressed, on behalf of the African members of the Council, that we need to take a holistic approach. I fully agree with that. I also think that it is important for Mali's transitional Government to increase its commitments to, and investment in, socioeconomic development, including efforts to secure tangible results in the Northern Development Zone and provide health care, education and other essential services to its people in order to effectively improve their standard of living. We call on the international community to act and assist Mali in its fight against COVID-19, support its economic and social recovery and help it achieve independent and sustainable development at an early date.

At the international and regional levels, there must be increased support and greater synergy. That means we need to continue to support African countries in finding African solutions to African problems and support the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union in their important roles to help advance Mali's transition.

We applaud the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINUSMA for continuing to perform their duties under complex circumstances, and support their ongoing vital activities to maintain peace and stability in Mali. We urge Malian stakeholders to increase coordination with MINUSMA and ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers.

As we speak, Mali finds itself at a crucial juncture. Malian parties must use this transition as an opportunity to open a new chapter for national peace, stability and prosperity. Together with the rest of the international

community, China stands ready to continue contributing to peace and development in Mali.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Indonesia and Viet Nam, the two other States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the Security Council.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his insightful briefing. We welcome Ambassador Issa Konfourou, Permanent Representative of Mali, to this meeting.

We reaffirm our support for the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Mali. We are concerned that since the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali, the Malian people have yet to fully enjoy peace and stability.

We closely follow recent developments in Mali and take note of the appointment of the President and the Prime Minister of the transitional Government in Mali. We join other Member States in welcoming and supporting the tremendous efforts by leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to stabilize the situation and prevent violence. We also welcome the 5 October declaration of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on Mali.

We also commend MINUSMA's efforts, particularly those to enhance its early-warning and rapid response capacities. We welcome the continued support it provides to the Government of Mali in its response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its redeployment of the reconstituted units of the Malian forces to northern Mali. We also take note of the progress of the catch-up phase to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Mali.

However, we remain concerned about the security situation, especially in central Mali, due to terrorism and intercommunal violence. The number of terrorist attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and security forces has increased in the north and centre of Mali. We would like to extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the families of those who lost their lives in terrorist and extremist attacks. We reiterate that such attacks are unacceptable and their perpetrators must be brought to justice.

A successful transition requires tremendous efforts to tackle challenges such as food insecurity, organized crime and abuses linked to the spread of violent extremism, terrorism and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, we would like to make the following points.

First, we urge the transitional Government and parties concerned to strengthen mutual trust, work together to promote reconciliation and carry out a swift transition to civilian rule. It is also important that they resolve their differences through dialogue and honour the 2015 peace agreement. The meaningful participation of women in the early stages of the political process must be ensured.

Secondly, we stress the urgent need to ensure the safety of the Malian people and to continue fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The transitional Government and other stakeholders should also uphold their obligations and responsibilities to implement international humanitarian law and protect women and children in Mali.

Thirdly, we call for a coherent and integrated approach to the security, humanitarian, and socioeconomic development challenges in Mali, including with regard to addressing the impacts of climate change. There should be more workshops, capacity-building seminars and training courses for women and youth on sustainable development. It is also necessary for all parties to take decisive action to address the most urgent humanitarian needs and destabilizing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fourthly, we call for support and the continued implementation of MINUSMA's adaptation plan in order to enhance the Mission's ability to project force throughout Mali. In addition, we stress the importance of the redeployment of the reconstituted units of the Malian armed forces, especially in the north. It is also essential that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel continue to receive the support needed to carry out its tasks.

Lastly, we reiterate our support for the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS and the international community in facilitating the transition process and promoting stability in Mali.

We commend the tireless efforts of Special Representative Annadif, United Nations civilian and

uniformed personnel for their commitment to peace and stability in Mali, especially in this very difficult time.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): At the outset, I would like to express Estonia's full support to the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and Special Representative Annadif. I also wish to thank Mr. Annadif for his excellent briefing.

Estonia notes positively the formation of the transitional Government in Mali. We call on all the parties to ensure that it is operational and to start preparing for the elections ahead. It is important to refrain from any build-up of tensions and for all parties to work together. The rule of law and constitutional order in Mali must be restored without any delay.

The role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union is essential in easing the tensions in the political crisis in Mali. We commend ECOWAS for its swift reaction and continuous engagement in supporting the restoration of constitutional order in Mali, and welcome their announcement on Tuesday on the lifting of sanctions.

The Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali remains the basis for a political solution and peace in Mali. We are encouraged by the positive tones that the transitional Government has taken regarding the implementation of the Agreement, and we now urge the parties to follow up their promises with concrete steps.

The tasks ahead of the transitional Government are not going to be easy since many challenges to achieving lasting peace in Mali remain. We urge all Malian parties to address the grievances of the society in earnest. It is important to implement the much-needed reform agenda and deal with the structural challenges. In this regard, the full and meaningful participation of women in political processes remains of key importance.

We remain concerned about the overall deterioration of the security situation in the country. The growing number of clashes between the terrorists and other armed groups are only further exacerbating the plight of civilians. Estonia continues to support Mali through various international platforms. At the same time, it is important to stress that lasting peace in the country can be achieved only through full engagement and cooperation between the Malian parties.

Estonia strongly condemns all violations of human rights in Mali, and we call on the authorities to conduct full investigations and hold perpetrators accountable.



The allegations against the national security forces and the authorities need to be taken especially seriously. A lasting solution can only be built on trust between the people and the Government.

**Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif for his valuable briefing.

Let me begin by saying that the United Kingdom very much welcomes the establishment of the civilian-led transitional Government in Mali. We commend the decisive action taken by the Economic Community of West African States in response to events in Mali in August and the strong role of the subregion in supporting the progress made since then.

The last time we met to discuss Mali, on 19 August, the United Kingdom called for a return to civilian government as soon as possible to deliver for and engage with the frustrations of the long-suffering Malian people. We therefore echo the Secretary-General's call for the transitional authorities to take ownership of implementation of the 2015 Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The 2015 agreement remains the bedrock of building stability and peace in the country.

I am pleased to hear from Special Representative Annadif that a signatory group has entered the Government, and I am pleased to hear that implementation of the agreement is a key part of the new Government's mission. But let us be frank — there has simply not been enough progress on the political track since 2015, neither have the former Government and its Ministers nor the signatory groups taken seriously enough their obligations to deliver on that agreement. Meanwhile the people of Mali have suffered and peacekeepers in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have paid with their lives.

I therefore wish today to pass a clear message to the new Government of Mali and to all the signatories of the 2015 agreement. There is no time to waste. There can be no more evasion of responsibilities. They must now demonstrate that they are serious — serious about securing the country and serious about providing services to their people who need them, especially in the north and in the centre.

I see in the Chamber today the representative of Mali, and I look forward to hearing from him later. He is an excellent colleague and always has important things to say. But I would just like to say to him — and I hope he can report this to his Government — that by our next meeting I hope he will be able to tell us about substantive progress on the following five issues.

The first issue is the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement. I do not mean words about an intention to do so, but actual steps in that direction. I want to echo the representative of Estonia's words on the importance of the participation of women.

Secondly, concrete steps must be taken to return the State to the north and the centre of the country and to provide services to the people who live there.

Thirdly, the catch-up phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process must be completed.

Fourthly, reports of human rights violations and abuses must be investigated, and action must be taken against impunity.

Fifthly, political, administrative, electoral and institutional reforms must be undertaken to prepare the grounds for elections.

None of us expects miracles in three months, but I think we need to see action on all those strands and evidence of progress. We are there to support Mali. The United Kingdom will be following up both in New York and in Bamako. We continue to play our part. Our bilateral spend in the Sahel is now over \$100 million a year, which is primarily humanitarian in nature, and, through multilateral channels, we contribute a third of \$390 million a year. Furthermore, the United Kingdom will deploy a long-range reconnaissance task force to MINUSMA this year.

With respect to MINUSMA, may I just say that we welcome the progress made by the Mission under trying circumstances, including the difficulties and challenges presented by the coronavirus disease. The rationale for mission adaption to increase MINUSMA's flexibility and mobility of operations remains strong. MINUSMA will, of course, continue to have a vital role to play in supporting implementation of all of the points I have just made. But we will look to the Malian authorities, of course, primarily, working with MINUSMA, to reinvigorate the process.

Let me end by saying again that we are in the Chamber to support Mali. We are here to support the people of Mali and the Government of Mali. We are here to support the country's transition. But we expect to see tangible progress in the next reporting period.

**Mrs. Craft** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif for his briefing and for his leadership and that of his team during the current political crisis in Mali. It is especially great to see him in the Chamber today. I thank him for being here.

The leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have played vital roles in stabilizing the political situation created by the 18 August overthrow of Mali's elected president. The United States condemns these actions and immediately halted our security assistance in Mali in response. Since August, progress has been made to return to constitutional order, but let me stress: the establishment of a transitional Government in Mali is only the first step. We urge the transitional Government to honour all its commitments to ECOWAS.

The Security Council should be prepared to use the tools available to it should the transitional Government fail to uphold its commitments. We will not accept military control over civilian authorities, delays to elections or elections that are not credible. Former officials and all others detained without judicial process must be released. Free and fair elections must be held within 18 months. Elections must also include the full, effective and meaningful participation of women, internally displaced persons and refugees, youth populations and marginalized northern groups.

The central provisions of the 2015 Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remain relevant to the country's long-term stability and that of the region. The transitional Government must adhere to its commitment to moving implementation of the framework forward, and we hope to see continued regional engagement, including by ECOWAS. We also expect the transitional Government to ensure greater meaningful participation of women at all levels and in processes and institutions that support and monitor implementation of the Algiers accord.

We remind all actors that obstructing or delaying implementation of the agreement is grounds for listing

by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali. We urge MINUSMA to continue its support for and cooperation with the 2374 Committee and the Panel of Experts.

Recent events clearly indicate further need to address Mali's long-standing governance shortcomings. The transitional Government will need to follow through on its commitments to improving governance and to supporting Mali on its path towards democratic rule and sustainable peace. Malian citizens must believe that their Government is legitimate, equitable and willing to meet their needs. This means ensuring justice and accountability for human rights violations and abuses committed by security forces. If that commitment is absent, no degree of international engagement is likely to succeed.

Now more than ever, we recognize MINUSMA's vital role in protecting civilians and stabilizing the country. We look forward to MINUSMA helping Mali to hold free and fair elections, supporting the transitional Government to achieve its stated goals, including fully implementing the Algiers accord, and extending the rule of law. We expect further progress in the Mission's protection work in the centre, especially responding to early warnings with specific protection for women and children. We also expect MINUSMA to continue its efforts to facilitate the return of the State presence, State authority and basic social services in the centre, which are key to the Mission's long-term exit strategy.

Finally, allow me stress that the United States remains a steadfast partner of the Malian people. The United States Special Envoy for the Sahel visited Bamako last week to underscore that point with the new authorities, as well as to signal our continuing partnership with the Malian people. Two weeks ago, Secretary Pompeo announced nearly \$152 million to help people displaced by conflict in the Sahel, of which approximately \$54 million is for Mali.

**Mr. Kridelka** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the efforts of the Russian presidency of the Security Council to enable us to resume our meetings in the Chamber.

I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Minister Annadif for his briefing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and all United Nations staff in Mali for their tireless efforts in often difficult and dangerous circumstances. In that regard, I would like to point out that Belgium

continues to provide specialist troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). There are currently 95 military personnel, in close cooperation with our German partners. The fact that Belgian soldiers serve in Mali today under the German flag is a fine example of the unity of our European Union (EU). I will address five points in my statement.

First, Belgium has condemned the seizure of power by the military on 18 August. Mali faces an additional challenge as it struggles to emerge from the multidimensional crisis affecting it and the region. It is positive that the Economic Community of West African States reacted immediately and decisively, resulting in the latest welcome developments. The appointment of a civilian President and Prime Minister, as well as the formation of a Government to implement the Transitional Charter, which has now been published, are important steps on the path back to constitutional order. Today's release of the officials detained since 18 August is a step in the same direction. It is a positive gesture.

Belgium wishes the transitional authorities every success in their work and hopes that they will be able to meet the expectations of the Malian people. My country is ready to support them in carrying out the tasks set out in the Charter. The organization of credible elections within 18 months and the constitutional and institutional reforms, including the important security sector reform, are in my view a particular priority. In that regard, Belgium, together with its EU partners, is currently looking at the modalities for resuming the operations of the military European Union Training Mission in Mali and the police EUCAP Sahel Mali mission in Mali.

Secondly, it is crucial that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali continue. I welcome the Malian statements to that effect. Moreover, the struggle against terrorism and in support of development must not be put on hold. I would like to recall that, in addition to the necessary security measures, combating terrorism also involves strengthening the legitimacy of the State. That could be bolstered by decisively combating impunity and the resolve to respect human rights in all situations. The publication of the report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali will certainly serve to initiate both reforms and criminal proceedings. Similarly, I encourage our Malian partners to bring to a successful conclusion the investigations into the

alleged abuses committed by the defence and security forces against civilians. That must lead to trials. In that regard, it is deeply regrettable that, to date, no trials have been held against alleged perpetrators of crimes against MINUSMA peacekeepers.

Thirdly, the situation in central Mali remains of great concern. We call for a reformed State to redeploy as soon as possible and to perform its statutory role of protecting its weakest citizens. Self-defence militias and terrorists are increasing in number for many reasons — the lack of security, justice, education and, above all, quality jobs, including for young people. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of MINUSMA, in cooperation with other actors.

That brings me to my fourth point. We regret that few women have been appointed to the new Government despite the fact that Malian legislation provides for a minimum of 30 per cent women Ministers. The meaningful participation of women is crucial to the success of each of the three points I mentioned above and to finding a way out of the crisis and a long-term solution.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of maintaining and strengthening humanitarian access in order to reach those in need. Countless people continue to suffer, particularly due to the lack of access to basic social services, and it is important that such assistance reach them. In that context, I would like to draw attention to the contents of the two events organized last month by the Niger, Belgium and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office. It is clear from those discussions that climate change exacerbates the plight of the populations in the Sahel. Through those side events and the meeting convened by the presidency of the Niger, we have tried to further raise global public awareness of this disaster and its impact. In conclusion, I would like to stress that Belgium will remain Mali's friend by supporting it on the path to strengthening its democracy, sustainable development and security.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): Let me first say that the Security Council has come home. I thank you, Mr. President, for all your efforts. I think it is good that we are back in the Chamber and that we are able to see and talk to each other. I thank you very much for your initiative.

With regard to Mali, let me first thank the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and,

indirectly or directly, my colleague from the Niger for what ECOWAS has done in terms of engagement and mediation. Let me also welcome the transitional arrangements. As colleagues before me have said, what is important is that those arrangements now be implemented not only in terms of timelines but also in terms of the transition to a civilian leadership. I believe that we have said that such a transition offers Mali a new and fresh start. We all sincerely hope that the new authorities do not let their population down.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for his briefing. He very clearly explained the basis for what has happened, namely, the loss of the population's trust in the political actors. I believe that it is key that the new leadership regain its trust. The Estonian Ambassador has just highlighted the importance of the new leadership regaining the people's trust and addressing their grievances. The key to that is an inclusive Government. Just like my Belgian colleague and others said, it is truly a bad start that, in the month of the twenty-fifth of the Beijing Declaration and the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), there are 21 men and four women. Why do leaders not understand that in such transitions, in order to get an inclusive Government to answer to the needs of the people, there must be a fair number — 50 per cent, or even 30 per cent — of women in the Government. I ask that it be reported back how important it is to have an inclusive Government. That means that the transitional leaders have a discussion with civil society, women's organizations, youth, artists and people from all levels of society.

On the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, my French colleague, European Union colleagues and other colleagues have said everything. There is a clear road map and it needs to be implemented.

Also, with the regard to security sector reform, it is important that it continue, and the justice sector is key. The justice sector has to work. Impunity is not an option. If you want to regain the trust of the people, those who have committed crimes have to be held accountable. Otherwise, it will not work.

I want to reconfirm to the Ambassador of Mali the German commitment to his country. We are a major troop contributor. We very much appreciate what my Belgian colleague just said concerning the cooperation that we have among the countries of the European Union, in particular with Belgium, in our engagement.

We stand by our engagement. We also promote political dialogue. We are ready also in the framework of what Philippe Kridelka said with regard to stronger engagement concerning police officers. We will remain engaged through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and stabilization mechanisms. Germany will stand by his side. We know how difficult the situation is — and climate change has repercussions that make the work even more difficult — but Issa Konfrourou must not let his people down.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the representative of Germany for what he said about us, but I would just like to note that our lengthy journey and return home began in July, during the German presidency of the Security Council, with Germany's efforts to return first to the Secretariat and then to the Chamber. Therefore, the German delegation pioneered this journey, as did subsequent presidencies, which was supported by all States members of the Security Council. I want to thank all my colleagues at this meeting, once again, for supporting the idea of returning to the Security Council Chamber.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too wish to thank the Russian presidency for convening meetings of the Security Council in their usual place. I also thank Christoph Heusgen and Germany for beginning this journey. I want to welcome the Ambassador of Mali. I also want to congratulate the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the major work it has accomplished.

We wish to convey our most sincere appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for his comprehensive and timely briefing on the situation in Mali. At the outset, we pay tribute to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for the efforts under way at this critical time. Indeed, Mali stands at a critical juncture. It has sunk further and further into a political abyss following the events of August, which seriously impacted its democracy and was firmly condemned by the international community, including the Dominican Republic.

We are deeply concerned about the long-lasting impact that the events of August on the whole gamut of issues affecting Mali, which seriously undermine constitutional order and create a political vacuum, which risks further slowing the implementation of the

Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the reform agenda, eroding the gains made and fragmenting the country's social fabric.

Against this sobering backdrop, at the outset we must also recognize the strategic and crucial mediation efforts undertaken by ECOWAS since the beginning of this crisis. In the context of Mali's delicate political and social reality, ECOWAS voiced its strong condemnation and demanded an expeditious civilian-led political transition back to constitutional order.

The news regarding the lifting of sanctions imposed on Mali by the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS is positive and reveals that there is an understanding on the actions to be taken on issues critical to a speedy and successful transition. We are delighted by the decision taken by the authorities to free all the civil servants detained during the coup d'état, as it did yesterday.

The current state of affairs in Mali requires a new set of priorities to be established and an evolution to guarantee the speediest possible return to constitutional order. However, we should in parallel continue to focus on, demand and support — arguably with greater dynamism — the implementation of the peace agreement as the most viable framework to address the most pressing issues for peace and security. That can be achieved only through the concerted empowerment of all Malian society.

The fight against terrorism, violent extremism and asymmetric attacks, together with national, regional and international partners, must remain a priority together with addressing the deteriorating security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the centre and north of Mali and strengthening State authority in those areas. To that end, it is important to press on with the redeployment of the reconstituted Malian defence and security forces and to generate economic opportunities to protect the livelihoods of the Malian people.

Despite the fact that we are focusing in the immediate term on the transition, we must also stay focused on addressing the root causes of conflict in Mali and the Sahel and recognize the enormous challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. At the same time, we must ensure the full effective and meaningful participation of women and young people at all levels and in all spheres, including with the implementation of the peace agreement.

In addition, we must support mechanisms designed to deter, through sanctions, individuals who undermine or impede the implementation of the peace agreement, as established in resolution 2374 (2017), on Mali. We also wish to highlight the work of MINUSMA in raising awareness of the obligations relating to sanctions, and we encourage regional partners to continue strengthening cooperation together with the United Nations.

I wish to encourage donor countries to increase their support for official development assistance and innovative debt relief and financial programmes for countries most severely affected by the pandemic and the devastation it has sown. We call for the vaccine and other health technologies required to face COVID-19 to be made equitably accessible and for its distribution to be guaranteed to all human beings on the planet. To that end, the role of the World Health Organization, donor countries and the private sector are essential to achieving this objective on the basis of cooperation, solidarity and justice.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We are grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif for his briefing about the situation in Mali and the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). As we see it, in the current circumstances, the Security Council must continue to focus on the situation in the country.

We remain very concerned about the situation in Mali after the coup d'état of 18 August. We are in favour of creating conditions for the speediest possible resumption of the national dialogue to develop mechanisms to return the country to constitutional order.

We have taken note of the decisions made by the interim authorities in this regard, including the transition charter and the appointments of the President and the Prime Minister. The formation of a ministerial Cabinet is also a step in the right direction. We welcome the discharge from custody of former Prime Minister Boubou Cissé and other high-ranking officials arrested on 18 August. We expect that the terms of the transition period — 18 months — will be strictly upheld, to be followed by general elections.<sup>[P]</sup>Prospects for stabilization in Mali also depend on whether the new authorities and other political forces will scrupulously follow the Algiers Agreement on Peace

and Reconciliation in Mali. We hope that this will be subject to constructive dialogue with signatory groups. Security and governance reforms should continue, and the interests of all peoples of the country, especially in its northern territories, must be duly taken into account.

Terrorists, who, judging by their increased attacks, feel increasingly comfortable, must not be given an opportunity to benefit from the current predicaments. Militants' improvised explosive devices are impacting civilians more and more often, as was the case in September, when a bus and an ambulance were attacked. Especially alarming is the situation in Mopti, which is the arena of recurrent attacks on military patrols and convoys. Violent inter-ethnic and intercommunal clashes continue in the centre of the country. In general, Mali has suffered an increase in assaults and abductions, an upsurge of delinquency, racketeering and robberies, and rising numbers of human rights violations.

The humanitarian situation is also of great concern. The coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) has exacerbated the need for food assistance. Schools remain closed and medical facilities are overburdened. This calls for an urgent reaction on the part of humanitarian agencies.

We support the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the area of political mediation for Mali. We highly commend the role of ECOWAS and its Special Envoy for Mali, Mr. Goodluck Jonathan. We call on the Malian authorities to closely engage with colleagues in the region. We welcome the fact that steps aimed at the restoration of constitutional rule have led to the lifting of ECOWAS restrictions for Mali.

We must be mindful that the situation in Mali is a key factor for regional security. We expect that the Malian armed forces will continue to fully participate in the operations of Group of Five Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and that decisions to galvanize counter-terrorist action, made at the regional summit in Nouakchott, will be put into effect.

Bamako and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) must by all means pursue their close cooperation and coordinated activities. Peacekeepers must proceed with the efficient implementation of their mandate in Mali's northern and central regions. We welcome the assistance of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, through MINUSMA, and its help in countering COVID-19. At

the same time, we stress that the main responsibility for the protection of civilians, the restoration of control over the northern territories and the resolution of socioeconomic and other problems, is incumbent on the Malians themselves.

In conclusion, we express our appreciation to Special Representative Annadif for his effective leadership of the Mission.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Mali.

**Mr. Konfourou (Mali)** (*spoke in French*): I too welcome the Security Council's return to its traditional Chamber and the fact that its first meeting here concerns Mali. I hope that the situation will continue to improve and that this Chamber will be filled with representatives of Member States actively participating in the Council's work.

I warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on the accession of your country to the presidency of the Security Council for this month of October 2020 and express to the sisterly delegation of the Republic of the Niger and Ambassador Abarry our deep appreciation for their work guiding the Council last month.

I would also like to convey the deep gratitude of the people of Mali to the Security Council, Secretary-General António Guterres, all countries contributing troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and all partner organizations and friendly countries for their tireless efforts to help Mali to recover and stabilize.

The Government of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2020/952) and I thank Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali, for his outstanding briefing and updates on the latest developments in Mali. I also took careful note of the messages, appeals and comments of Council members. I pledge that I will faithfully convey them to the transitional authorities of Mali. I would now like to share some comments and observations on the report of the Secretary-General and the latest developments in Mali.

As the Secretary-General's report so aptly notes and as reflected in many statements made today, the period under review was marked by socioeconomic

problems and socio-political unrest in Mali, linked to the deterioration of the security situation in the country and governance issues and further aggravated by a post-electoral crisis following legislative elections. The numerous popular demonstrations that resulted from it were brought to an end by a military intervention, on 18 August, which sanctioned the resignation of the President of the Republic, preceded by the resignation of the Government and the dissolution of the National Assembly.

Thus, the Comité national pour le salut du peuple was born, which immediately undertook consultations with all Malian stakeholders in order to agree, together, on the architecture and modalities of the transition in Mali. It was within this framework that national consultations were held from 10 to 12 September in Bamako, which enabled representatives of all components of the country to make an uncompromising diagnosis of the shortcomings of our democratic system, with a view to achieving the political and institutional reforms necessary for the overhaul of the Malian State.

At the end of this participatory and inclusive process, the charter and road map for the transition were adopted. The main missions assigned to the transition relate to the restoration and strengthening of security throughout the national territory; the recovery of the State and the creation of the basic conditions for its re-establishment; the promotion of good governance; an overhaul of the education system; the adoption of a social stability pact; the launch of political, institutional, electoral and administrative reforms; the organization of general elections in order to pass power on to the legitimate authorities; and the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process. The transition charter also specifies the bodies responsible for bringing the transition to fruition.

Thus, in accordance with the charter, an inclusive electoral college proceeded to the designation on 21 September of Mr. Bah N'Daw as President of the Transition and Head of State, and of Mr. Assimi Goïta as Vice-President. The President and Vice-President of the Transition were sworn in on 25 September.

Subsequently, the President of the Transition and Head of State appointed Mr. Moctar Ouane as Prime Minister of the Transition and Head of Government. The Government, which comprises 25 members representing a range of national viewpoints, was

formed on 5 October. I must underline here the notable entry into the Government of four representatives of movements signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, including two representatives of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and two of the Platform coalition of armed groups. In the same vein, a 121-member national transitional council will soon be set up comprising stakeholders from all strata of Malian society.

We have made considerable advances in a short period of time with a view to addressing the concerns that the Council has raised. Only a short time after the coup d'état, we have a transitional President, a Prime Minister, a Government and a road map that must be implemented over the 18 months of the transition.

With respect to bringing about peace in the country, I can confirm the freeing yesterday of civilian and military personalities who had been arrested and detained in connection with the events of 18 August.

Given the current context in Mali, it seems to me very important to reassure once again all our partners that our national authorities remain determined to respect all national and international commitments to which Mali has freely subscribed, in accordance with the principle of State continuity.

In that regard, I would like here unambiguously to reiterate the determination of the transitional authorities to continue relentlessly with the diligent implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The investiture speech of the President of the Transition is proof of this, and the presence, as I noted earlier, in the Government of representatives of the signatory movements to the Agreement is a very clear indication of the will of the Malian parties to pay particular attention to that central question. In addition, the transitional authorities of the Transition have also made a commitment to ensure respect for human rights throughout the national territory, in particular in the context of the fight against terrorism, in accordance with Mali's international commitments, including by the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

We cannot fail to mention here the regional dimension of instability in the Sahel. The Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) Joint Force has now reached a fairly encouraging level of operationalization, and the results obtained are quite significant. Next month we will have the opportunity to share details on the Joint Force with the Council. However, the Force still needs to see the

fulfilment of the promises of support made by the G-5 Sahel partners in order to help consolidate the work done by the Force on the ground.

I would like here to echo the call made by the Secretary-General and the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel in favour of a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and of the predictable and sustainable funding of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, including through the United Nations.

Mali's sustainable stabilization process is at a critical juncture. This is a decisive period for peace and stability in Mali and in the Sahel. Success in that area depends first of all on the sacred union of Malian forces to save our country, and I can assure the Council that the transitional authorities are fully committed to laying the foundations for the rebuilding of Mali. I must also state emphatically that the success achieved in this crucial period also depends on the level of international support for exiting the crisis.

I take this opportunity to express the warm thanks of the transition and the people of Mali to the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS for the tireless efforts they have deployed to support Mali in exiting the crisis. Its efforts have been pivotal, and our people

will never forget them. I also welcome the lifting of the ECOWAS sanctions, a very positive step for the Malian people.

I also thank the African Union, the European Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the International Organization of la Francophonie and all of our bilateral partners that have supported us during this particularly difficult time.

I also commend the outstanding work done on the ground by the women and men of MINUSMA since 2013, working alongside us and under the able leadership of Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, under conditions that I know are not easy, even extremely difficult and often dangerous, far from family and country. I reiterate the gratitude of the transitional authorities and the people of Mali to French-led Operation Barkhane, to the countries contributing troops to MINUSMA and to all bilateral and multilateral partners for their continuing support aimed at a definitive settlement of the Malian crisis.

I would conclude by paying a particularly strong tribute to all of the victims — I repeat, all the victims — of the Malian crisis, be they civilian or military, foreign or Malian, killed in the line of duty.

*The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.*