



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

## 8945<sup>th</sup> meeting

Tuesday, 11 January 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Ms. Juul . . . . .	(Norway)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
	Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Opong-Ntiri
	India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Nusseibeh
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

### The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2021/1117)

Letter dated 4 January 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/8)

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Mali**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2021/1117)**

#### **Letter dated 4 January 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/8)**

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and Ms. Adam Dicko, social activist and Executive Director of the Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2021/1117, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, and S/2022/8, which contains the text of a letter dated 4 January 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

Before we begin with our speakers list today — recalling the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507) on its working methods — I wish to encourage all speakers, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and focus on key issues. In that spirit, briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to seven to 10 minutes. Everyone is also encouraged to wear a mask at all times, including while delivering remarks.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

**Mr. Wane:** I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Mali since the release of the Secretary-

General's report (S/2021/1117) and his letter (S/2022/8). As you have both documents before you, Madam, I will focus my briefing on more recent updates, progress and challenges.

Over the weekend, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held an extraordinary summit to take stock of the steps taken by Mali towards the holding of elections and a return to constitutional order. The summit followed the previous meeting of the regional leaders, on 12 December 2021, in Abuja, as well as Mali's confirming that it would not be able to meet the deadline for the holding of elections on 27 February 2022 and pledging to revert to ECOWAS by 31 December with a revised electoral calendar following the completion of the Assises nationales de la refondation. The Assises, as you may recall, Madam President, were billed as a forum that would create broad political consensus on the future direction of Mali, notably through institutional reforms.

Held between 11 and 30 December at the local and national level, the Assises nationales produced extensive recommendations on institutional and governance reforms. Although they are subject to divergence among members of the political class over their relevance and modalities, it is clear that the implementation of the Assises nationales recommendations, which will go well beyond the transition period, would go a long way to supporting a more stable Mali.

Following the conclusion of the Assises, on New Year's Eve, the Malian authorities conveyed to the Chair of ECOWAS the Assises outcomes along with a projection for the holding of presidential elections at the end of 2026. On 5 January, the ECOWAS Mediator was dispatched to Mali for further consultations, after which Mali reverted with a revised proposal for the holding of elections at the end of 2025.

As outlined in their communiqué, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government found the proposed timetable to be unacceptable. Urging the Malian authorities to focus on a speedy return to constitutional order, they upheld the individual sanctions put in place on 12 December and imposed additional ones, including the recall of the ECOWAS member States ambassadors from Mali; the closing of land and air borders between member States and Mali; the suspension of all commercial and financial transactions, with exemptions for food products, medical supplies, petroleum and electricity; the freezing of Malian public-enterprise

assets located in commercial banks in the region; and the suspension of financial assistance from ECOWAS institutions. As indicated by ECOWAS, these sanctions are to be reviewed and gradually lifted on the basis of the finalization of an acceptable timetable for elections and requisite progress towards its implementation.

Following the announcement, Mali made a number of decisions, including recalling its ambassadors from ECOWAS member States and closing its borders with them. In an address to the nation last evening, the Transition President called for calm and unity, and he also stated that Mali remains open to dialogue with ECOWAS to find a compromise that would reconcile the aspirations of the Malian people and respect the principles of the organization. Given that support to the transition is a key aspect of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), we will continue to work with Malian authorities alongside ECOWAS and the African Union to find a consensual way out to overcome the current impasse and facilitate Mali's return to a path to peace and stability.

Against the current political backdrop, the importance of the Mission's priorities linked to the 2015 Peace Agreement and stabilization of the country's centre cannot be overemphasized, as they are both critical to Mali's long-term stability. In this regard, it should be noted that the Assises nationales de la refondation highlighted the need to enhance the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Some of its main recommendations — such as the constitutional review, the creation of a Senate and the acceleration of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and territorial-decentralization processes, — offer a window of opportunity on which all stakeholders should build to move forward on the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The international mediation led by Algeria, including MINUSMA and other international stakeholders, continued to be actively involved. On 5 January, the mediation met for the third time since October 2021 and called for the early convening of a decision-making meeting between the Malian signatories, which we hope will take place in the coming weeks and allow for overdue progress, most notably on global DDR on the basis of the Government's concrete offer to integrate 26,000 combatants in the next two to three years. A high-level seminar to be organized next week will also allow all stakeholders to better

operationalize the articles contained in the Independent Observer's recommendations.

MINUSMA has consistently continued to engage with Malian parties and international partners in support of the peace process. It has also pursued its efforts on the ground, notably by supporting the reconstituted battalions, now an integral part of the Malian armed forces, including the one in Kidal, which is currently planning its fourth patrol, which is to take place by the end of month.

MINUSMA's approach towards the centre of Mali continues to be multifaceted and revolves around structured support for Malian authorities linked to the drafting of a politically led strategy for central Mali, as requested by the Security Council. A series of consultations has been undertaken in recent months by the Malian *Cadre politique de gestion de la crise au centre* with MINUSMA support to identify strategic approaches, priority efforts and quickly implementable actions in such fields as security, governance, development and humanitarian assistance.

These efforts, made in support to the Peace Agreement and the stabilization of the centre, were undertaken as 2021 saw more extremist attacks than any years prior and with MINUSMA facing the highest number of casualties since 2013, following a significant rise of asymmetric attacks targeting main axes, convoys, camps and temporary operating bases. The series of coordinated attacks against our camps, as well as the death of 28 peacekeepers in 2021, including of seven Togolese in a single incident in December, underlines the dangerous environment in which MINUSMA continues to operate.

I would like to pay tribute to all of our troop- and police-contributing countries, including those from the region, who constitute the bulk of our troops and have been supporting Mali since the very beginning of the crisis in 2012.

The conflict has had a devastating impact on civilians and the humanitarian situation. On 3 December, for instance, 72 civilians, including 26 women and children, were killed near Songho, in central Mali, when their bus was attacked by extremist elements. The number of displaced persons has increased from 216,000 in 2020 to more than 400,000 a year later. The deteriorating security situation also affects agriculture production — more than 1.8 million people are expected to need food assistance in 2022,

compared to 1.3 million in 2021. This would be the highest level of food insecurity recorded since 2014.

Despite such difficult circumstances, the response to the humanitarian appeal has been lukewarm, as only 38 per cent of funds needed were received. Stronger support from the international community is urgently needed to address this funding gap.

One of the most concerning consequences of violence in the Sahel in the past few years is its impact on education. In Mali, more than half a million children have been affected by school closures, putting the future of the country in jeopardy and making youth more vulnerable to radicalization and abuse.

MINUSMA is making every effort to physically verify the status of schools during patrols in remote locations, while United Nations agencies are working closely with the Education Ministry to implement key mitigation strategies. We are exploring options to better support such efforts, including in terms of security, through the use of our own programmatic funding and trust fund, as well as communication and outreach.

Despite a very difficult environment and capacity challenges, MINUSMA peacekeepers continue to do their level best to protect civilians, main supply routes and key infrastructure, as well as support Malian institutions and promote local reconciliation and community engagement.

Here, I would like to highlight our effective response in Aguelhok, in Mali's far north, where MINUSMA's robust response to attacks in April was complemented by engagement with local authorities and community leaders as well as stabilization projects.

Another example is linked to the deployment of a quick reaction force and the establishment of a temporary operating base in Tassiga, in the Gao region, after extremists threatened the local population if they did not leave the village. MINUSMA, along with Malian reconciliation teams, also paved the way to the local reconciliation agreement signed in October between communities in Ogossagou, where some 200 civilians were killed in March 2019 and February 2020.

Furthermore, MINUSMA, in support of the Malian Armed Forces, is protecting key roads and infrastructure that are vital to increasingly isolated populations and to our operations, in particular bridges along the key axis between Sévaré and Bandiagara. We also continue to extend support to the Malian Defence and Security

Forces, notably through casualty evacuations, capacity-building and infrastructure.

Finally, the Mission is supporting humanitarian efforts in villages that have been encircled for months by extremist groups in central Mali. For instance, 49 tons of food were delivered to Farabougou through 22 flights from 21 December to 6 January.

Much has also been done to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers, in the light of the marked evolution of the threat, notably in tactics and the lethality of improvised explosives devices and mines. Significant improvements in terms of camp security and the contingents' preparedness, equipment and detection capabilities over the years have clearly saved many lives, but those efforts must continue. MINUSMA is also actively exploring the opening of additional supply routes in order to reduce risk to our convoys. As the Council knows, the Republic of Chad recently offered to deploy 1,000 additional troops to MINUSMA, a development that was welcomed by Malian authorities. Once operationalized, that would provide more flexibility to respond to threats against civilians and peacekeepers, while also providing the Mission with more room to support the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

It has been a decade since the crisis started. Unfortunately, hopes for an early resolution did not materialize. Instead, insecurity has become more widespread, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated, more children are out of school and the country has been plagued by an endless cycle of instability. Yet, the situation would have been far worse without the sustained and multifaceted engagement of the international community, including through the deployment of MINUSMA.

As Mali faces difficult times, we observe a deep aspiration among the people of Mali to reform, improve governance and create a more effective State. Mali's partners should build on those aspirations to help lay the foundations for lasting stability.

Every effort should be made to resolve the current challenges linked to the transition process as soon as possible. A protracted impasse would make it much harder to find a consensual way out, while increasing hardship for the population and further weakening State capacity. Such a scenario would have far-reaching consequences for Mali and its neighbours.

Beyond the political transition, it is crucial that the Council continues to pay equal attention to the implementation of the peace agreement and to the stabilization of the centre, which are two other building blocks for a peaceful a stable Mali.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Dicko.

**Ms. Dicko** (*spoke in French*): My name is Adam Dicko, Executive Director of the Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy, an organization that is active throughout my country. Its mission is to promote social justice and democratic values.

I welcome the opportunity to address the Security Council today. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to welcome Norway's initiative to include the voice of Malian civil society in this important meeting on the situation in Mali. In the 10 years that my country has been plagued by conflict and instability, several conferences and summits have been held without making room for those on the ground working to promote social justice, the defence of human rights and the construction of a peaceful Mali.

My country — and the Sahel, in general — are nevertheless rich in dynamic and innovative civil societies. They are rich in creative and ebullient youth. Without claiming to speak on behalf of the whole of Malian civil society, which is pluralistic and diverse, I am nevertheless pleased to be able to bring before the Security Council a vision of Malian youth on the ills that my country is experiencing and the aspirations that we hold. After 10 years of failed stabilization strategies and with the Sahelian crisis at its worst, it is time for a change in order to resolve the Sahelian crises. It is time for a paradigm change. It is time for humility; we must accept that the strategies we have attempted have been ineffective. It is time to allow the elaboration of common solutions that the local populations fully endorse.

Today I want to speak to the Council on behalf of Anta, a young girl from the centre of Mali who was the first victim of the security crisis. She was forced to flee her village to find refuge in a displaced persons camp and witnessed the massacre of her parents by terrorist groups. I also want to speak to the Council on behalf of Amadou, a young man from the south in search of economic prospects, who, barely out of adolescence, had to leave his country and take to the sea to cross

the desert, risking his life in search of a better life. I speak on behalf of all young Malians who aspire to a better tomorrow.

In these times of uncertainty for the whole of humankind, after two years of relentless struggle against the coronavirus disease pandemic, I would like to speak to the Council today about another virus that has been spreading in Mali and the Sahel for years and whose many variants are dangerously fuelling the crises and instability that bring us together today — social, economic, political and environmental inequalities.

This virus generates glaring disparities, particularly in access to essential services. In Mali, barely 2 to 3 per cent of the children of nomadic pastoralists attend school and life expectancy among the healthy population is barely 50 years. This virus deprives millions of young Malians of happiness and pushes most of them to live in poverty. It mutates and adapts by taking advantage of a system riddled with bad political governance, a lack of transparency and democratic deficiencies that makes many of my compatriots feel unintegrated in a society that at best ignores them and at worst excludes them.

For the virus of inequality is insidious. When power and wealth are monopolized by a small minority, trust in the system that enables such a situation to occur breaks down. That is exactly the other epidemic that Mali is facing today — the population's general mistrust vis-à-vis an unequal political, economic and social model, resulting in a broken social contract. Malian youth, who represent more than 45 per cent of the total active population, are, however, not asking for the world's compassion to rid themselves of the virus; they simply ask to be integrated into the concept of inclusive and fair public policies and that they be considered as key actors to bring about positive change.

The exacerbation of the Malian crisis compels me to make several observations.

First, with regard to the security situation, it is important to note the inadequacy of the current military response, which has shown its limitations and inability not only in overcoming the threat, but also in even containing it. Internal displacement linked to the violence among populations is leading to the displacement of families, thereby exposing children to a lack of education and young girls in particular to sexual and gender-based violence — children who grow up in environments polluted by the presence of armed men and weapons destructive of humankind at

an age when they are supposed to be learning about life in society and compassion for others; young men and women who are disappointed and outraged by a State that can no longer ensure their security; and the most vulnerable who join extremist groups for financial and material reasons but, above all, often simply to protect their loved ones.

At the same time, young Malians are following with curiosity media reports of the repeated actions of countries with so-called opposing points of view fighting for apparent geopolitical interests in new arenas after Syria, Afghanistan and Libya, to name only a few. Mali must not become the new battleground for world Powers.

It is incumbent upon Council members to safeguard peace and security. It is indeed the primary goal of the Council's mandate. Council members must not only live up to their responsibilities, but, above all, set an example. Malian soil deserves better than to be used as a political battleground. Members of the Council will be judged not by their statements but by their actions.

Malian democracy is in bad shape and lacks sincere friends. In the name of all-important stability, world Powers are negotiating compromises that are weakening its already-fragile democracy. There is an urgent need to guarantee greater transparency in public life, as well as in the relations that Council members maintain with my country, Mali, which will enable young people to see through the myths sold to them by ill-intentioned official and unofficial actors.

The lack of economic prospects exposes young people to migration as a solution, often clandestinely and at their own risk. However, financing solutions for entrepreneurship are primarily motivated to prevent migratory flows rather than to facilitate a genuine economic and financial development for the intended beneficiaries.

Aid is as important as the conditions under which it is granted. Today, unfortunately, Mali is facing the consequences of poor political and economic governance, fuelling the despair, hunger and poverty from which young people are the first to suffer. The issue of governance has been trivialized for too long by those who claim to provide the solution to the Sahelian crises. It is, however, at the heart of the challenges that we are facing in Mali.

There is now talk of returning the State to areas where it has been absent for years and which have been taken over by so-called jihadist groups. No one ever asks, however, about the kind of State to be restored under discussion. Is restoring a State that is often seen by young people as indifferent to their fate and even predatory the solution? Mali is suffering from a broken social contract. Our challenge is not only to restore the State, but also to transform it and public action so that they serve all Malians. Our problems are rooted in this inequality pyramid. Nevertheless, if inequalities act like a virus that spreads, mutates and kills, vaccines exist to counter such an epidemic.

The fight against inequality is within our reach. That means reinvesting heavily in high-quality social policies for the benefit of all. The international community has a crucial role to play. Today my country is marshalling precious resources to finance our security, often to the detriment of our schools and hospitals, which are just as precious and important as security.

I call on the Council to put its trust in the Malian people and their civil society. It is the key to solving the crises facing us. It is imperative that our civil society be supported and strengthened, through which we will improve governance by working for greater transparency and accountability in public action. We will bring new solutions and create a new way of living together.

In that regard, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has an important role to play, provided that it integrates local solutions in conflict management and involves local populations in the search for sustainable solutions. It is time to stop making top-down decisions. The budgets voted in New York must no longer determine the needs on the ground.

In view of the political situation prevailing in my country, I call on the Council to increase its involvement in rapidly finding solutions to the situation between the Government of Mali and the Economic Community of West African States for the benefit of the citizens, especially the young, for whom the future is becoming increasingly desperate. The Malian people is the first victim of sanctions and has already suffered enough. One does not impose sanctions on a people that is already suffering. For my part, I reaffirm that the young people are already engaged in reforging

mentalities and behaviours to give birth to true hope and our country's renewal.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Dicko for her briefing.

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

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

As the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) noted at its fourth extraordinary session on 9 January, the situation in Mali is extremely worrisome. The transitional authorities have not upheld their commitments, which they nevertheless undertook before the Malian people, ECOWAS and all international partners committed to Mali, and which were endorsed by the Security Council. There has therefore been no realistic path to date towards a return to constitutional order, and we are witnessing, on the contrary, a narrowing of the democratic space.

France therefore fully supports all ECOWAS efforts to ensure that the transitional authorities uphold their commitments and that the elections to end the transitional period are held within a reasonable time frame. As a result of the current crisis, the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali — the key to the stabilization of Mali — is no longer seeing any progress. At the same time, the lack of an integrated strategy for the central regions is exposing the population to insecurity and a deteriorating humanitarian situation.

Like ECOWAS, we deeply regret that the transitional authorities are using already-limited public funds to pay foreign mercenaries instead of supporting the national forces and public services for the benefit of the Malian people. France and its closest partners have strongly condemned the deployment on Malian territory of mercenaries from the Wagner Group, who are known to threaten civilians, plunder resources and violate international law and the sovereignty of States.

France remains determined to support Mali and the Malian people. We call on the transitional authorities to return to the path of dialogue, move forward with concrete preparations for elections based on a credible timetable, make progress on the implementation of the peace agreement and develop a strategy for the centre of the country. There is still time to meet the aspirations of the Malian people and the expectations

of Mali's partners — first and foremost, the countries of the region.

We recognize the gravity of the challenges facing Mali and we do not underestimate the scale of the task at hand. That is why we are continuing our military operations to address the terrorist threat in the Sahel and why, together with the European Union, we have continued to provide development and humanitarian aid to the Malian people. We are also strengthening our support for Malian civil society, whose vigour is to be commended.

France reaffirms its support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We welcome the commitment demonstrated by troop-contributing countries. We are very concerned about the threats posed by the deployment of Wagner Group mercenaries to the proper implementation of MINUSMA's mandate. In that regard, the serious experience of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic must serve as a lesson.

In conclusion, we will continue our efforts to meet the needs of the Malian people. We call once again on the transitional authorities to resume dialogue and to make clear commitments to a return to constitutional order.

**Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom):** I wish to thank to Special Representative Wane and Ms. Dicko for their briefings and for everything they are doing in the most difficult of circumstances.

Like other Council members, the United Kingdom is seriously concerned about recent developments in Mali. We deeply regret the deaths of eight peacekeepers as a result of hostile acts since the Council last met to discuss the situation in October (see S/PV.8893). The frequency of those deplorable attacks speaks to the severity of the security challenges facing Mali, with dire consequences for civilians and peacekeepers alike. It underlines the need for concerted efforts by the Malian authorities and international partners to stabilize the country.

Those efforts need to be led by a legitimate Government that is focused on meeting the needs of its people. Instead, we have a transitional Government that is focused on extending its time in office. Mali's proposal to delay elections by up to five years is deeply disappointing. It brings into question the transitional

authorities' commitment to democracy and the rule of law, despite assurances given to members of the Council during our visit to Bamako in October.

We continue to stand behind the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We call on the transitional authorities to prepare for elections without delay so that constitutional order can be restored as soon as possible. Like ECOWAS, we believe that any longer-term reforms should be taken forward by the next democratically elected Government. We encourage the transitional authorities to continue engaging with ECOWAS in good faith so that a credible election timetable can be agreed.

With the conflict in Mali escalating and spreading further south, civilians are in greater need than ever of protection and humanitarian assistance. The confirmed presence of the Wagner Group in Mali risks destabilizing the country further. The United Kingdom made clear its concerns in the joint statement it co-signed with other international partners on 23 December. We have seen how civilians have had their human rights abused and how United Nations peacekeepers have been put at risk by the presence of unaccountable Wagner forces in the Central African Republic. The deployment of mercenaries will only increase the challenges facing Mali. We urge the Malian authorities to rethink their decision.

The United Kingdom remains committed to the Malian people and to helping build long-term stability and development. Through our deployment to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, United Kingdom troops are making a tangible contribution to Mission objectives, including on the protection of civilians in hard-to-reach areas. They are also helping United Nations human rights teams to investigate abuses.

In November, the United Kingdom's Global Ambassador for Human Rights, Mrs. Rita French, visited Mali and heard about the declining space for human rights actors in the country and the remaining barriers to women's involvement in political and peacebuilding processes. The United Kingdom is using programme funding to help amplify women's voices, and we welcome the voice and testimony of Ms. Dicko here today. As we look toward elections and the restarting of the peace process, we urge the transitional authorities, signatory armed groups and all

stakeholders to redouble their efforts to include women and young people.

The United Kingdom will continue to monitor the situation in Mali closely. We believe the Security Council should do the same, keeping all options open with the aim of ensuring a timely return to constitutional rule and the protection of human rights.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, for leading the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and his briefing on the situation in the country. We also listened attentively to the civil society representative, Ms. Adam Dicko.

It is clear that improving the situation in Mali, implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, eradicating terrorism and alleviating socioeconomic difficulties depend above all on internal political stability. In that connection, we welcome the measures undertaken by the transitional Government of Mali aimed at conducting an inclusive nationwide dialogue with all stakeholders in order to identify a way forward to achieve further reform and development in the country. We trust that the results of that dialogue will be implemented as soon as possible.

We believe that commitments made with regard to re-establishing constitutional order must be implemented in accordance with the realities on the ground, which have their own logic and require certain necessary adjustments. We acknowledge and understand the difficulties faced by the Malian authorities in preparing for general elections. We agree that, without the restoration of State control in many parts of the country, it will be difficult to consider the results of the popular vote to be legitimate. That will lead directly to yet another wave of political destabilization, as it did in Mali in 2020. We believe that excessive external interference in those matters, as we have witnessed in recent months, can only further complicate the situation.

The security situation remains grave. Extremists continue to terrorize the local population and to attack Malian military units and United Nations peacekeepers. The Malian armed forces and the Blue Helmets of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali continue to suffer casualties and losses.



Against the backdrop of the unexpected reformatting of the French military presence in the country, as a result of which a number of key bases in the fight against terrorism in the region were shut down, the Malian forces must now single-handedly combat terrorist activity in those areas. In that connection, we are of the view that the Malian people are fully entitled to engage with other partners that are willing to cooperate with them to strengthen security. The hysteria surrounding the presence of the Russian company is yet another manifestation of double standards, for it is clear that the market for such services is monopolized by Western countries.

We welcome the development by Malian authorities of a comprehensive strategy to stabilize the centre of the country. We believe that, despite all differences in the present circumstances, it would be reckless to leave the country to the vagaries of fate, including vis-à-vis the drawdown of military and economic assistance. Moreover, the imposition of sanctions in the context of the already difficult circumstances faced by Mali will considerably degrade the situation for its population.

The stakes for security in Mali and in the region are far too high. In that connection, we are of the view that the Malian people have every right to look to other partners that are willing to work with them to strengthen security. Criticism of such action is hypocritical and disrespectful to a sovereign State.

It is imperative that close cooperation and the coordination of action between the Malian parties and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali continue. We agree that there is a need to finalize adaptation measures for MINUSMA as soon as possible. We support the efforts of peacekeepers to mitigate intercommunal conflicts and protect civilians. We believe that decisions regarding the modalities for the deployment of MINUSMA, including its troop numbers, should be taken in consultation with Bamako. No one is stripping Malians of their responsibility. Malians have the primary role in overcoming the current difficulties.

With regard to a resolution in Mali, we have always been guided by the principle of African solutions to African problems. In that context, we support mediation efforts on the basis of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

The situation in Mali is undoubtedly a key factor in regional security. We stand ready to thoroughly

consider proposals to expand assistance to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel through the Security Council. We reaffirm our willingness to cooperate closely with Mali and all international players to stabilize the situation in the country and the region as a whole.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Envoy Wane and Ms. Adam Dicko for their briefing and welcome the representative of Mali to this meeting.

At the outset, I would like to recognize the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and reiterate my country's condolences for the irreparable loss of the Mission's personnel in the exercise of its mandate.

Mali represents a very clear case of a complex network of and links among exclusion, inequality and corruption, on the one hand and armed conflict and violence, on the other, as was so clearly stated by Ms. Adam Dicko. That was the thesis that the President of my country put to the Council for consideration just a few weeks ago (see S/PV.8900).

The recent announcement by the transitional authorities of their intention to extend the electoral calendar further complicates the delicate political and security situation in Mali. Mexico deems it essential that those authorities commit to presenting an electoral timeline that does not unnecessarily prolong the transition period. The Security Council, through MINUSMA and the relevant United Nations agencies, must of course continue to accompany the process to guarantee the necessary technical and security conditions to ensure fair, credible and inclusive elections.

My country also supports the role of the Economic Community of West African States in facilitating the transition and the return to constitutional order. We take note of the sanctions adopted in Ghana on Sunday and we trust that they will not affect the operations of humanitarian actors in Mali.

My country is convinced that only a legitimate Government resulting from democratic elections, with the broad participation of women and young people, will be able to achieve the long list of pending reforms and meet the demands expressed during the national dialogue forum.

The spread of violence to the centre and south of the country also demonstrates that international presence is insufficient to stabilize Mali. The State must strengthen its authority throughout its national territory. Civil authority must therefore be imposed so that the Malian army and security forces can focus on their fundamental tasks: protecting the population from attacks by armed groups, eliminating violent extremism, neutralizing organized crime insofar as is possible and guaranteeing the country's territorial integrity.

**Mr. Biang** (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3) — Gabon, Ghana and Kenya — and I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, and Ms. Adam Dicko for their briefings on the current situation in Mali.

The situation in Mali is complicated because it combines a transition to a peaceful and democratic Government, the presence of transnational terrorist groups that have become more entrenched, regional dynamics and the resurgence of great Power rivalries.

The shared interest of the A3, as representatives of the will of the African Union, is a peaceful and secure Mali whose Government reflects the will of its people and has full control over its territory. Those are the objectives behind our joint statement. We recognize the urgent need for the Malian people to live in security and to have a Government that is able to meet the challenges and aspirations of its people. We further recognize that the growing threat of terrorism is destroying lives through violence and its negative impact on the economy.

The rapid increase in military spending to address this threat at a time when the economy is under pressure for the same reasons, owing to the taking up of weapons, has led to setbacks in development and livelihoods.

Insecurity is also fuelled by growing transnational crime, which attracts terrorist groups while eroding the State's ability to maintain order. Moreover, despite growing military means, efforts by terrorist groups to regain de facto control of the territory have not been effective overall, in spite of the military takeover of power:

The A3 commends the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for its technical assistance to the

transitional authorities, namely, in the development of a national security policy and the integration of former combatants into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and the future redeployment of reconstituted units towards northern Mali. However, there are clear limits to the Mission's mandate and capabilities to provide more effective security for Mali.

There are also clear limits to the capabilities of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which while promising in its design and ambition, lacks adequate funding and predictable training capacity. In that regard, we note the urgency of bridging the security gap caused by the closure of French bases in Kidal and Tessalit in northern Mali and Timbuktu as part of the reconfiguration of its military presence in the Sahel.

As the security situation deteriorates, it is becoming more fragile by the lack of progress in the transition. We take note of the holding of the National Refoundation Conference in Mali, which allowed a part of the Malian population to voice its views on the actions necessary for rebuilding Mali and the strategic paths for the Malian transition. The commitments resulting from those meetings, which were accepted by the military authorities, are essential to the objectives of security and development that we have set out above. As the A3 has previously observed, that will require adapted and tailored military means and resources, democratic legitimacy, inclusive diversity management, the fight against transnational crime and improved livelihoods at the local level to bring peace and security to the region.

In the light of these priorities, we again encourage the transitional authorities in Mali to honour their commitments and values that bind them to the collective ideals of the African Union.

(*spoke in English*)

On how to improve the security situation, we want to make the following proposals to the Council, the region and the broader international community.

First, we urge the welcoming of the 9 January communiqué of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), emerging from an extraordinary session in Accra under the chairmanship of His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana. We call on the Security Council to respect and embrace the determination of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS that the proposal by the authorities to extend

the transition to five years is unacceptable and that an expedited transition to constitutional rule in Mali should be undertaken without delay.

Inclusive democratic and competent government are the foundation of a secure Mali, which, if established, will reverse the insecurity that is such a threat to regional and international peace. We therefore call on the Council to extend its full support to the decision and enforce the further measures set forth in the communiqué. These measures includes closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS member States and Mali; suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS member States and Mali, with the exception of essential listed products; the freezing of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS Central Banks; the freezing of Malian State enterprise and parastatal assets in commercial banks across the region; and the suspension of Mali from all financial assistance and transactions with all ECOWAS financial institutions.

We encourage the region to ensure that the sanctions are implemented with careful and supportive regard being given to the operational needs of MINUSMA and the ongoing efforts against terrorism in Mali and the Sahel. We also express our support for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, in particular the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and decentralization and development processes, particularly in the north of the country. We invite the Malian transitional authorities to continue their efforts in this direction.

Secondly, the ongoing deterioration of the security situation in Mali marked by increasing numbers of attacks targeting civilians and peacekeepers in central, northern and southern Mali, coupled with the increasing use of improvised explosive devices, are of major concern. The lack of effective State presence in parts of the country has emboldened these terrorist groups, leading to a climate of fear, increased school closure and the absence of basic services and humanitarian activities.

It is crucial to keep foremost in our minds that the instability of the security situation in Mali has significant impacts not only on the rest of the continent but also beyond Africa's borders. We must tirelessly continue to work so that this country does not become a temple of jihadism and terrorism that ultimately threatens our peace and common security.

We therefore urgently call for a more adequate response to the growing insecurity. This must include commensurate logistical, material and financial support for the Joint Force of the G-5 for the Sahel, pursuant to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. We are deeply convinced that only a United Nations support office can provide more direct, predictable, reliable and adequate financial support for the Joint Force. The A3 is convinced that this is the correct approach, and we strongly encourage the Council to change the paradigm and examine the question of financing in a more favourable light.

We propose the deployment of a rapid intervention brigade capable of conducting combat operations against extremist groups, as has been done in the framework of such other missions as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We further welcome the request by ECOWAS to have a more robust and offensive mandate that will enhance the operational capacity of MINUSMA to deal with terrorism challenges in the region. While noting that the Secretary-General recommended enhancing the troop strength of MINUSMA, we encourage him to enhance his engagement with the Malian authorities in this regard.

We are encouraged by the regional dynamic marked by joint operations to fight terrorism as well as the signing of an agreement between Mali and Chad allowing for the deployment of a thousand additional Chadian soldiers within MINUSMA. We also welcome the decision by the authorities to immediately activate the ECOWAS Standby Force in preparation for any eventuality that might occur on account of its decision on the Malian situation.

We urge the Council to use the coming weeks to come to grips with the growing continent-wide challenge of terrorism. It is time that members consider additional measures that are clear on the difference between the national need to undertake political stabilization and the regional need to combat transnational terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and the Islamic State.

Thirdly, the A3 welcomes MINUSMA's ongoing adaptation plan and the Secretary-General's call for the scaling up uniformed personnel to enhance the Mission's ability to support national authorities in protecting civilians, as set forth in his report contained in document S/2021/657. We commend MINUSMA peacekeepers for their ability to robustly repel hostile

attacks, particularly in Aguelhok, where there were 26 attacks between July and December alone.

We welcome MINUSMA's ongoing efforts to enhance its casualty evacuation procedures, including through a Headquarters review in July. We pay tribute to the MINUSMA soldiers who have worked tirelessly to restore peace and stability in Mali, often in very trying security conditions. As we are concerned about the safety of peacekeepers, we take note of the lack of sufficient and adequate airlift capability, in particular with regard to medium utility and armed helicopters, which continue to hamper Mission performance. The A3 therefore urges the Council to source the Mission with outstanding air assets, which are critical enablers for MINUSMA to continue implementing its mandates across its area of operation.

Fourthly, the A3 expresses its concern at the deterioration of the humanitarian situation resulting from the growing insecurity, given the hundreds of thousands of Malians in refugee camps in neighbouring countries or in camps for internally displaced persons. The humanitarian situation could worsen owing to intercommunal conflicts, climate-change-induced food insecurity and destruction of civilian-owned property by terrorists.

The A3 takes note that the 9 January ECOWAS decision suspending commercial transactions between ECOWAS member States and Mali exempts essential consumer goods, pharmaceutical products, petroleum products, electricity, and medical supplies and equipment, including materials for controlling the coronavirus disease. These are key items for sustaining the provision of humanitarian aid. We urge ECOWAS countries to ensure that the implementation of all measures announced in the communiqué is undertaken with maximum regard for the livelihoods of the Malian people because such measures are key to meeting basic daily needs.

I would like to conclude by calling on the transitional authorities to cooperate with the international community to ensure a speedy transition that delivers transparent, credible and inclusive elections and the re-establishment of constitutional order.

We further call on the Security Council to return to the drawing board to consider the mandates and resources that will meet the actual needs on the ground.

**Mr. Tirumurti** (India): I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for his briefing on the recent developments in Mali and the activities of MINUSMA in implementing its mandate. I also thank Ms. Adam Dicko, from the Youth Association for Active Citizenship and Democracy, for her insights.

At the outset, allow me to express again our deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the seven peacekeepers from Togo who lost their lives in an attack on a MINUSMA convoy in central Mali on 8 December. We also express our deepest condolences to the families of peacekeepers from countries of the region who lost their lives in recent months. We strongly condemn those attacks and call upon the Malian authorities to bring the perpetrators of such heinous crime to justice. Peacekeeping and peacekeepers cannot function in isolation. The expeditious implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali and the strengthening of the State's security and administrative presence across the territory of Mali are urgently needed to safeguard peacekeeping activities in Mali.

The political situation in Mali remains uncertain. It is important for the Malian stakeholders to reach a consensus on the substantive aspects of the transition, notably the transitional Government's reform agenda, electoral reforms and the period of transition. The decade-old political and security challenges faced by Mali cannot be resolved without a credible political process and the involvement of all stakeholders. While we note the recent efforts of Malian transitional authorities, particularly the holding of National Refoundation Conference, the onus now lies with the Malian stakeholders to take forward the process. We hope that the transitional authorities will undertake necessary political, electoral and institutional reforms and work purposefully towards holding elections and returning to democratic governance.

The implementation of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains fundamental to achieving peace and stability in Mali. Unfortunately, the reporting period has not seen much progress on this front due to disagreement between the transitional Government and the signatory parties. All parties concerned should work together and advance

the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process without any further delay.

The security situation in Mali remains worrisome, with terrorist groups such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara targeting innocent civilians, national and international security forces and MINUSMA peacekeepers in Mali. The recurring attacks in recent months indicate a further disturbing trend that the influence of terrorists is growing beyond the northern and central regions of Mali to threaten some parts of the south as well.

Addressing the terrorist threat in Mali, which is also present across the Sahel, needs a strong regional security response supported by adequate resources and capacities. At a time when international security forces are restructuring their presence in the Sahel, it is even more important to ensure that such restructuring does not lead to the creation of a security vacuum to be filled by terrorist and jihadist groups, but rather should be supplemented by a strong presence of national and regional forces. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our call for greater United Nations support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, including by providing the Joint Force the necessary financial support.

We commend the efforts of MINUSMA to assist the Malian authorities. However, it is important that the Mission be provided with adequate resources to implement its mandate. MINUSMA remains one of the most difficult peacekeeping missions. The safety and security of its personnel should therefore be paramount for all of us. We reiterate our support for greater technological integration in United Nations peacekeeping missions so as to enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers and ensure effective mandate delivery. We also take note of the Special Representative's efforts to implement the provisions of resolution 2589 (2021). However, given the increasing attacks against peacekeepers in Mali, reporting on its implementation should be more comprehensive. We hope that the issue of inadequate reporting will be addressed in future reports of the Secretary-General.

I would like to conclude by saying that Mali is facing multidimensional challenges rooted in long-standing imbalances in its administrative, constitutional and security institutions, which have not been addressed in decades. The Malian stakeholders need to take

full ownership and make sincere efforts to undertake reforms and implement the peace agreement. We remain hopeful that the people of Mali will be able to solve their multidimensional challenges through a democratic process. We continue to encourage Malian authorities and the Economic Community of West African States to engage constructively towards an early solution to the current crisis. India remains steadfast in supporting the Malian people in their quest for peace, security and development.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing and, belatedly, for the support he provided to the Security Council when we visited Mali in October. I would also like to commend Ms. Adam Dicko for her briefing. We welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative from Mali, and we look forward to his response to the comments made here today.

Today I would like to address three broad topics: attacks on peacekeepers, the implementation of the political transition and the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the increasingly volatile security situation.

First, the United States, like others, expresses its deep condolences to the families of the civilians and peacekeepers killed in attacks on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) late last year, as well as to the Governments of Mali, Egypt and Togo. Particularly troubling are the number of attacks carried out with improvised explosive devices. Peacekeepers must have the necessary equipment to ensure their safety given those threats. To that end, the United States will continue to support peacekeeper safety by providing necessary training and equipment through our Global Peace Operations Initiative, but we also urge and implore the Government of Mali to work with MINUSMA to improve the security environment.

Secondly, we need to support every effort from MINUSMA, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and others to help the Malian transition authorities to implement the political transition and the Algiers peace accord. During the Security Council's visit to Mali in October, the fragile security and political situation was on display. We support and commend ECOWAS and mediator Goodluck Jonathan in their engagement with the transitional

Government to facilitate a return to democracy in Mali. We commend the strong actions taken by ECOWAS on 9 January in support of democracy and stability. For those who call for an African solution, I hope they support the leadership of ECOWAS. I commend the three African members of the Security Council for their strong statement today.

We share the deep disappointment of ECOWAS with the blatant lack of political will shown by the Malian transition Government to make progress towards organizing elections, as it committed to do following the August 2020 coup d'état. We urge the transitional Government to keep its pledge to the Malian people to return their country to democracy. It is what the people of Mali have asked for; it is what they want; it is what they deserve. A five-year transition is not in their interest and extends the pain of the people.

Elections must be free and fair; they must be transparent. That means promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, both on the ballot and by registering to vote. And it means using domestic election observers to facilitate those free and fair elections in a timely way. We welcome Boudjemaa Delmi's leadership of the Agreement Monitoring Committee towards those ends, but we need concrete progress to implement the Algiers accord.

Let us recall the specific benchmarks in resolution 2584 (2021), in particular the integration of the remaining ex-combatants as part of an accelerated demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process. We have to reach that benchmark, and we have to meaningfully include women-led civil society groups and operationalize the women's observatory too. In Mali, the Council met with a number of such groups, and they were quite impressive. As we have heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, we must work to return Mali to a path leading to peace and stability.

Thirdly, I want to discuss the increasingly volatile security situation, as evidenced by the audacity, frequency and severity of attacks against civilians, national security forces, international forces and MINUSMA. Widespread intercommunal violence, terrible gender-based violence and an increasingly dire situation in central Mali — that is not the Mali that I know from the many years of working in that country, and it deserves the attention of the Security Council. MINUSMA's work on behalf of Malian women who

have experienced sexual violence is particularly important. Malian authorities can, should and must pursue those cases and deliver justice for those women.

MINUSMA also needs, following the Secretary-General's proposal, an increase to its troop ceiling. That will help protect civilians in central Mali with more quick-reaction forces and air assets and enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers through explosive ordnance removal teams. The transition Government has the primary responsibility to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and assets. As a reminder, those involved in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers may be subject to sanctions. The transition Government should carry out transparent and credible investigations and hold those responsible accountable.

As noted by others, we are particularly concerned about the reported presence of individuals linked to the Wagner Group. Based on their pattern of human rights abuses and threats against United Nations peacekeepers in other contexts, they pose a danger to MINUSMA peacekeepers and the people of Mali. MINUSMA deserves to have clarity on whether those so-called contractors are part of official bilateral assistance, and, if so, they need to be held accountable by their country of origin. The transition Government must also do its part to protect civilians, create conditions for stability and address social grievances and root causes of instability, as stressed by Ms. Dicko.

As the Security Council has made clear before, the transition Government needs a comprehensive strategy designed to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence, re-establish State authority, presence and basic social services in central Mali and hold timely elections. That comprehensive strategy is the key to progress. It will advance all our shared security, development, human rights and humanitarian goals, and, if it is done right, it will lead to peace and security throughout Mali. It is what the people of Mali deserve.

I say to Ambassador Issa Konfourou that our goal is to work with him. It is to work with Mali to find a lasting solution for Mali and for its people. I know that a Mali isolated from its community of nations and ECOWAS is not where Mali wants to be. A Mali — the subject of Security Council discussions and attention, as we have seen today — is not a comfortable place to be. And I know that this is not where Mr. Konfourou wants to be

today. Let us work together to bring stability to Mali and its people and to return Mali to the community of nations, where Mali belongs.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane and Ms. Dicko for their insights today.

I would like to highlight three key issues: the deteriorating security situation, the threat of terrorism and the political transition process.

First, we are deeply concerned about the continuing deteriorating security situation in Mali, which has been amply discussed previously by colleagues. The increased attacks against civilians and peacekeepers — and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General spoke of coordinated attacks — clearly indicates the need to take urgent measures to address security challenges and establish State presence throughout the country. It is imperative that the authorities agree on a comprehensive politically led strategy to protect the lives of civilians.

Albania commends the steps taken by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to increase the number of women personnel, which is critical to an effective engagement with the population across all sectors. Women have proven to be very successful in protecting civilians, accessing communities and creating a relationship of trust with local populations.

Secondly, we have deep concerns with regard to the impact of the activities of terrorist organizations, and we highlight the importance of continuing counter-terrorism efforts with the coordination of local, regional and international forces. We cannot underestimate the spread of radicalization and violent extremism and the influence of new actors in the region. The challenges are indeed huge, but the deployment of foreign mercenaries in the country only adds to the complexity. We call on the authorities to pause and not take such impactful decisions lightly. As we have seen in other scenarios, that could undermine the already extremely fragile stability, lead to severe violation of human rights and have serious consequences, even for the relations of the whole United Nations system with the country. Mali needs sound decisions and responsible actions, not unaccountable mercenaries.

The steep rise in human rights violations and abuses documented by MINUSMA is troubling.

Human rights must be at the centre of the security response, and we must continue fighting against impunity for violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law. We strongly urge the transitional authorities to pursue active investigations of perpetrators and hold them accountable.

Thirdly, we stand with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in expressing serious concerns with regard to the delay in the transition. The Malian authorities have failed to respect their pledge and instead are requesting to postpone the transition for up to five years. We fail to understand what justifies that unacceptable extension, if not the pure desire to stay in power. Albania firmly supports the latest measures taken by ECOWAS. They are of magnitude and should make the Malian authorities reflect seriously. We call on the Malian authorities to review their file and do what is required to facilitate an expedited return to constitutional order. It is never about rulers. It not about generals. It is always about the people, including the Malian youth, as we heard earlier from Ms. Dicko. They should be the ones to decide.

Moreover, we are concerned about the lack of progress on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Serious work is required, and tangible results are needed. At the same time, consultations to establish an independent women's observatory with a view to enhancing the role of women in the peace and political process continue to be inconclusive.

*(spoke in French)*

Mali's social fabric cannot be repaired or rebuilt without the active contribution of women. There is no peace without inclusion. There can be no peace without women. Albania supports the good offices and mediation efforts of MINUSMA. We call on the Malian authorities to retrace their steps for the good of the country and their people.

Lastly, we believe that the Council must stand firm, maintain pressure and adopt the necessary measures, just as the Economic Community of West African States has done, so that Malian stakeholders can move from a process of consultations that is dragging on to concrete actions and reach a consensus, which we hope for, on a reasonable transition period.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative El-Ghassim Wane

for presenting the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2021/1117). The report leaves no doubt about the escalation of violence in recent months. I also thank Ms. Dicko for her presentation, as well as the Permanent Representative of Mali for his participation in this meeting.

The situation in Mali is extremely serious, considering that the country has been weakened by years of conflict and is vulnerable to the actions of extremists and other forces that oppose national reconciliation. In that scenario, the proposal of the transitional authorities to postpone — for up to five years — the return to the constitutional framework in no way contributes to stabilization efforts.

A comprehensive political reform is of interest of all sectors of Malian society. The initiative to base it on broad popular consultation, bearing in mind the participation of women and minority groups, is commendable. But the Malian people deserve a prompt transition towards democracy. That is the only way to build legitimate institutions, without which the country will continue to face serious threats to its integrity. For that reason, Brazil supports the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to ensure the timely conclusion of the political transition.

From the beginning, ECOWAS has played an extremely important role in fostering dialogue among local political forces and promoting an expedited return to constitutional order. We urge the Malian transitional authorities to heed the message sent by ECOWAS and to hold general elections as soon as possible.

It is important to bear in mind that elections alone will not be enough to end the Malian conflict. To stop the escalation of violence, it is essential to implement the commitments made by the parties to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Unfortunately, the report of the Secretary-General indicates that little progress has been made in that regard in recent months.

We urge all political forces to respect the commitments made in Algiers, in particular with regard to the integration of ex-combatants into the armed forces. At this time, when the peace process is under threat from insurgent groups, the political leadership must take the necessary steps to earn the trust of the Malian people and of the international community.

We share the Special Representative's great concern about the activities of rebel groups and

terrorist organizations in Mali, especially the expansion of the terrorist threat in southern Mali and the significant increase in attacks against United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) camps and personnel. The recent attacks that resulted in the deaths of numerous civilians and nine peacekeepers demonstrate that we are still far from achieving stability and guaranteeing the safety of the civilian population. Reports of human rights violations continue to be commonplace, without those responsible being brought to justice to answer for their crimes.

Brazil firmly supports the work of MINUSMA, whose mandate remains extremely relevant. We were particularly pleased that the most recent report on the Mission highlighted the quick-impact projects and community violence reduction projects implemented by MINUSMA, which contribute to the achievement of the Mission's priorities and help address the root causes of conflict in the country. MINUSMA has done everything possible to contain an even greater deterioration in security conditions. However, the Mission's mandate should be understood as transitory, and a lasting solution depends on the Malian State being able to assume its responsibilities.

Brazil defends the strengthening of State institutions and security forces in Mali, with strong support from the international community. We welcome the Malian authorities' efforts towards the elaboration of a comprehensive, politically led strategy for Central Mali and hope that it will be finalized soon. In order to reverse the continued deterioration of the security situation in Mali, there is an urgent need to advance a timely conclusion of the political transition and the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Brazil thanks MINUSMA and Special Representative Wane for their invaluable efforts to support both processes.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Wane, whom it is a pleasure to see again, for his insightful briefing this morning. I also wish to thank Ms. Dicko for her remarks, which were extremely pertinent and, frankly, rather startling. Furthermore, it is a pleasure to have here with us this morning our colleague and brother Ambassador Konfourou of Mali, for whom we are always available.



Ireland shares concerns regarding the deteriorating situation in Mali. We join others in condemning, in the strongest terms, the recent attacks targeting civilians and peacekeepers, as well as national and international security forces. We express our sincere condolences to all those who have been affected.

Political and institutional reforms are undoubtedly necessary to address the considerable challenges in Mali. However, a prolonged political transition will serve only to aggravate instability. Meaningful and sustainable reform could be pursued legitimately by an inclusive and democratically elected civilian Government. We encourage the transitional Government to engage constructively with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as international partners, in order to establish a timetable for the return to constitutional order and the holding of elections. As our three African Security Council colleagues have said this morning, we support the conclusions of the ECOWAS Summit held last weekend.

The worsening security situation contributes to the significant challenges facing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We commend the work of the Mission in implementing its mandate in such difficult circumstances. The threat to Malian civilians and peacekeepers serves to underscore the need to ensure that the Mission is adequately and appropriately resourced. We support the Secretary-General's call to increase the capacity of MINUSMA personnel to support the national authorities in protecting civilians, particularly in the centre of the country.

*(spoke in English)*

We strongly welcome the work of the Mission in supporting communities at the local level in security, stabilization and protection efforts. The Mission needs to be accompanied by a long-term nationally owned and politically led stabilization plan for security and the provision of essential State services. We call on the authorities to take the decisive action needed to enable the State to fulfil its own responsibility in providing basic social services, access to justice and protection for its people. That matters to the Malian people in their daily lives.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation. We call for full accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses and for justice measures to be strengthened and to be used effectively.

We reiterate our position that all counter-terrorism efforts, military or other, must abide by international law, including international human rights and international humanitarian law.

The documented increase in grave violations against children, who are the most vulnerable — including the recruitment and use of sexual violence, killing and maiming — is deeply concerning. Sexual and gender-based violence remains a particular worry, and Ireland welcomes the signing by the transitional authorities of an action plan to address conflict-related sexual violence.

Ireland's views on the participation of women in the building of peace and sustainable peace are well known. We welcome recent advancements made, but we emphasize the absolute importance of the appointment of women to the Agreement Monitoring Committee and the operationalization of the independent women's observatory. We need to see concrete and meaningful progress. The women of Mali are part of the solution to the challenges being faced today. They need to be in the room where discussions are being had and at the table for decision-making.

We heard today, in graphic terms from the Special Representative, about the worsening humanitarian conditions and of a significant and worrisome decline in humanitarian access. Rising insecurity, increased displacement and an alarming food crisis, coupled with the adverse effects of climate change, all require our urgent attention in the Security Council. We call on all parties to support humanitarian action and to facilitate the basic delivery of essential assistance to those in need.

*(spoke in French)*

The current crises that Mali is facing are serious. An inclusive, democratic, civilian-led Government is the best way to achieve security and prosperity in Mali. Ireland encourages the transitional authorities to work with established, recognized international partners to restore peace and security. We call on all parties to redouble their efforts for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Ireland's support and gratitude for MINUSMA, including the members of the Irish Defence Forces who are serving in that mission. I would also like to assure Mr. Wane of my country's full support. We stand with him and his team in advancing towards peace and security in Mali.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing. I also listened attentively to Ms. Dicko's statement. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Mali, Ambassador Issa Konfourou, and his presence at the meeting.

At present, Mali is in a critical period of promoting a political transition, maintaining security and stability and promoting national development. A peaceful, stable and united Mali serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community. I wish to highlight the following.

First, Mali held a National Refoundation Conference at the end of last year, where all parties reached significant consensus on a series of major issues, such as the transition process, political reform, national security and a peace agreement. The entire international community should support all parties in Mali in implementing the outcome of the conference, resolving differences through dialogue and consultation and injecting new impetus into national peace and stability.

The issue of political transition and general elections is currently the focus of attention. The promotion of the relevant process should be aimed at maintaining unity and stable development in Mali. The drawing up of the relevant road map should respect the will of the Malian people, be tailored to the actual situation in Mali and avoid new disruptions that could be caused by electoral arrangements.

China has taken note of the decision taken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 9 January and the reaction of the transitional Government of Mali. China understands that the efforts of ECOWAS and the transitional Government of Mali are in the same direction of creating enabling conditions for the holding of general elections and ensuring that they are conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in Mali. China encourages the two sides to maintain contact, strengthen dialogue and jointly make efforts to resolve regional issues. At the same time, forces outside the region should avoid exerting excessive pressure on Mali, which will in no way contribute to a political settlement.

Secondly, terrorist forces have frequently launched attacks in the central and northern regions, which are spreading to the south, with clashes among armed groups, militias, extremist forces and so forth. Mali is

a significant force in the counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel region, and the international community should continue to support the Malian Government's efforts to fight terrorism and maintain stability and respect Mali's sovereignty and leadership in conducting foreign security cooperation. It is necessary to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and achieve further results on issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the redeployment of armed forces; and a Northern Development Zone. China supports Mali in developing a comprehensive political process-based strategy in the central region and making more efforts to restore State authority and reduce poverty to eliminate the root causes of conflict.

Thirdly, China appreciates the leadership of Special Representative Wane in overcoming difficulties and actively fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The Mission is deployed in the most dangerous peacekeeping mission area. In 2021, as many as 19 peacekeepers from Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Egypt, Togo and other countries lost their lives, which is saddening. China expresses its condolences to the relevant countries of the peacekeepers who lost their lives. It is necessary to identify weak links, improve rescue and medical capabilities for peacekeepers and use new technologies to strengthen situational awareness, improve emergency response and effectively address the threat of improvised explosive devices.

MINUSMA should allocate its resources and deploy personnel in accordance with the mandate provided by the Security Council, keep everything tailored to the actual situation on the ground and respect Mali's points of view. In readjusting their military deployments, the countries concerned need to strengthen coordination and cooperation with MINUSMA to avoid an additional burden on the Mission, while fulfilling its mandate and avoiding causing a negative impact on the safety of peacekeepers.

**Mrs. Nusseibeh** (United Arab Emirates): We also welcome the participation of the Ambassador of Mali in today's meeting.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his comprehensive briefing and

for the efforts undertaken by the Mission to promote stability and peace in Mali and the wider region. We also listened carefully to social activist Ms. Adam Dicko.

At the outset, I would like to express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Mali, where civilians continue to bear the brunt of violence. I also want to pay tribute to all the United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving for peace in Mali since the deployment of troops there in 2013.

In the context of the recent developments in Mali, we would like to highlight the following points.

First, we stress the need to complete the political transition process in Mali and make tangible progress towards the elections process through the continuation of the transitional Government's efforts in that regard.

It is also important to coordinate the regional, subregional and international efforts to support the political transition process, in line with the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, as its implementation is critical for supporting the peace process. My country takes note of the outcome of the Extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West African States held in Accra on 9 January. We encourage ongoing dialogue to bring stability to Mali, and we stress the importance of the Security Council's support for those efforts.

In parallel, the active, meaningful and full participation of women in the political transition process and in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must be ensured. We commend the ongoing efforts to establish an independent women's observatory to facilitate women's participation in political and peace processes within Mali.

Secondly, as indicated by the Special Representative, the security situation in Mali remains critical. Terrorist groups in the country continue to expand their presence and operations despite efforts to counter them. We stress the important role of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel to combat terrorism in Mali and the Sahel region.

Moreover, achieving stability in Mali requires the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach to countering the root causes of extremism and building the resilience of Malians, while also strengthening

the rule of law in Mali and providing economic and development opportunities for the entire region.

Finally, we emphasize the need to make every effort to address the security threats related to climate change in Mali in line with resolution 2584 (2021). We hope that issue will be considered further in the Security Council. The United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to addressing the phenomenon of climate change and its consequences for international peace and security, and we look forward to working with our partners in that regard.

We welcome United Nations efforts to provide better coordinated in-country programmes for food and water security. However, we believe that it is important for development agencies and banks to significantly increase their programmes within fragile communities in West Africa and the Sahel. Adopting a set of targets over the next two years could therefore be an important starting point to that end.

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

In the interest of time, I will add just a few words in my national capacity, while the rest of our statement will be published online.

We are deeply concerned by political, security and humanitarian developments in Mali, and, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, the transitional Government — and we as partners — must address at least three things in a coordinated way. First, the reported increase in internally displaced persons, the systematic targeting of civilians and continued attacks on schools must stop, including in the centre of the country. Secondly, the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must be respected as the legitimate foundation for peace and continued dialogue in Mali. Thirdly, and finally, for the sake of Mali's youth, from whom we just heard today, we urge Mali's transitional leaders to tread carefully in the use of the power, which they have taken by force.

The political transition needs a new dynamic. Security and good governance must go hand in hand. We ask the Malian transitional Government to heed the messages from the Economic Community of West African States.

Developments in Mali affect not only Malians, but also neighbouring countries. Elections need to be held, and constitutional order needs to be restored as soon as

practically possible, in order to ensure legitimacy and accountability. That is the only way we can know the true will of the Malian people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to again remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I give the floor to the representative of Mali.

**Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by saying that the Government of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/1117). I would like to thank my dear brother and friend Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my sister Ms. Adam Dicko for her contribution to today's debate.

Having listened to members of the Security Council, I would like to respond on behalf of the Government of Mali both to the observations of the Secretary-General in his report and to the remarks I heard today.

I would like to begin with the sociopolitical situation in Mali, which was marked by the holding of the Assises nationales de la refondation. All of us have heard that, throughout the month of December, Malians undertook an uncompromising diagnosis of their country's current challenges. The relevant recommendations that came out of those meetings constitute a new road map for the transitional Government.

The political and institutional reforms recommended will guarantee lasting institutional stability and a better future for our people. Following those meetings, the Government of Mali immediately began consultations with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the transition timetable. However, it was with amazement that we learned of the adoption of economic and financial sanctions against Mali. Those measures come in stark contrast to the Government's efforts and its willingness to engage in dialogue with a view to reaching a compromise with ECOWAS. The Government of Mali has vigorously condemned those illegal and illegitimate sanctions taken by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and ECOWAS in flagrant violation of the founding texts of those organizations and in contradiction with the principles of solidarity and the pan-African ideal.

I would like to remind the Council that, with regard to WAEMU, an embargo decided by Heads of State and Government applicable to a sovereign State constitutes a clear violation of the WAEMU treaty and the statutes of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). Moreover, the freezing of the assets of a State or its public and parastatal enterprises cannot be imposed by the BCEAO, which remains an independent body to which each member State has granted its sovereign right to issue currency.

With regard to ECOWAS, the Government of Mali has denounced and rejected the following decisions, which are not based on any Community text: the closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Mali, the suspension of commercial transactions between ECOWAS countries and Mali, the freezing of assets of the Republic of Mali in ECOWAS central banks and the freezing of assets of the Malian State, public and parastatal enterprises in the commercial banks of ECOWAS countries.

In his address to the nation on 10 January, the transitional President of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Assimi Goïta, declared that, despite the illegal, illegitimate and inhumane nature of certain decisions, Mali remains open to dialogue with ECOWAS to find consensus between the interests of the Malian people and respect for the principles of the organization. On that occasion, he also called on ECOWAS to review its interpretation of the situation in Mali by conducting an in-depth analysis and putting the interests of the Malian people above all other considerations. Finally, the transitional President reaffirmed his determination to do everything possible for a rapid return to constitutional order and a peaceful and secure Mali.

The Government of Mali is therefore appealing to the solidarity and support of friendly countries and institutions. I would like to thank the African peoples who are showing their support for the Malian people in this difficult situation.

I would now like to respond to certain observations made by a number of Council members.

First, in terms of security, it has been noted that the Government continues to intensify its efforts to recruit, train and equip the armed and security forces, with a view to strengthening their operational capacities, and I can tell members of the Council that those actions are producing very encouraging results on the ground.

In December 2021, the Malian Defence and Security Forces launched a vast offensive throughout the country, which continues to this day and is inflicting heavy losses on extremist groups, including terrorist leaders. Several arrests took place, and a large quantity of war material was recovered. Those operations will continue and intensify with the ultimate objective of restoring the authority of the State, providing basic administrative and social services throughout the national territory and protecting our people and their property. I salute all the partners who are supporting Mali in achieving those objectives.

I will take this opportunity to respond to a comment made by my colleague the Ambassador of France and certain members of the Security Council who accuse the Government of Mali of utilizing a private security company. Those who promote this campaign of misinformation know full well that Mali has not contracted any private security company and that there are no mercenaries present on Malian soil.

For its part, Mali does not seek confrontation — not at all. My country remains open to all partners who wish to help it meet the many challenges our people face. It is in that context that Mali has maintained a relationship of State-to-State cooperation with the Russian Federation since 1960. And it is thanks to that historic and dynamic cooperation that Russian instructors are currently in Mali to advise and train Malian soldiers in the use of the equipment acquired from the Russian Federation.

I wish for my dear friend Ambassador De Rivière to empathize with and support the people of Mali in its pursuit of peace and stability. The people of Mali are committed to the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and secular nature of the Republic of Mali. In unison, the Malian people say that all partners of Mali are partners of all the people of Mali. Our people are opposed to being divided through friendship with one segment of the population pitted against another segment. The better we understand that, the sooner we will be able to reach our common objectives.

I would also like to say a few words to my friend Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield, the Ambassador of the United States of America. First, I thank her for the strong message delivered at the end of her statement. The President of the Transition said it yesterday and I will repeat it: Mali will never be confrontational

or isolationist with its traditional partners. We have complex and difficult problems to resolve. We can no longer bury our wives and children, and neither can we continue to watch the destruction and burning of our villages and crops or the destruction of our social cohesion. We are open to all Council members and every partner of Mali that is willing to help us restore peace and constitutional order to Mali. The people of Mali are the ones most committed to democracy. I understand members' concerns and hope they will be at our side to accompany us in that process.

On the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali, I recall that the Government and the signatory movements remain committed to its diligent and intelligent implementation. The signatory parties remain committed to accelerating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

The National Refoundation Conference, which I spoke about just now, strengthened the implementation of the accord. The Conference recommends the drafting of a new constitution that would include, among other major reforms, the creation of a senate.

Under the development chapter of the Agreement, the Government set up a northern regions development fund, and I am delighted that the 16 projects selected in that framework were launched on 21 October, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report. I appeal here to Mali's partners to continue to help Mali finance that specific development strategy for the regions of northern Mali.

With regard to the current situation in central Mali, the Government is working on the implementation of the integrated management strategy in central Mali, which focuses on strengthening the security arrangements in the centre and the planned dialogue with our moderate compatriots.

On the issue of increasing the personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to which some Council members made reference, I am happy to once again inform the Council that the Government of Mali agreed to the request of the Government of Chad to deploy 1,000 additional troops to Aguelhok.

In conclusion, I would like to state emphatically that the people and the Government of Mali reiterate their appreciation and gratitude for the enormous

contribution of the Security Council to the stabilization efforts under way in Mali. I pay tribute to all victims of the Malian crisis — civilian and military, foreign and Malian — who have fallen on the field of battle in Mali.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*