



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9061**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Monday, 13 June 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Ms. Dautllari . . . . . (Albania)

*Members:*

Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Korbieh
India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya . . . . .	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Norway . . . . .	Mr. Kvalheim
Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills

## Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/446)

Letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/448)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Mali**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/446)**

#### **Letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/448)**

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

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. Sadya Touré, Director of Mali Musso and writer.

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/2022/446, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, and S/2022/448, which contains the text of a letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

**Mr. Wane** (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on developments in Mali in relation to the recently released report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/446), in the context of the discussions on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Over the past three months, the Mission has continued to implement its mandate, based on the strategic priorities set out by the Security Council. I

will start with an update on MINUSMA's support to the transition under way in Mali.

Since January, MINUSMA, in particular through the local follow-up committee on the transition, has remained actively involved in efforts to overcome the impasse related to the extended transition period. On 4 June, in Accra, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) once again reviewed the situation in Mali. The deliberations took place in the light of the report presented by the mediator, former President Goodluck Jonathan, following his exchanges with the President of the Transition, on the eve of the summit, on how to reconcile the Malian request for a 24-month extension and the positions of the regional organization.

After extensive discussions, the Heads of State and Government asked the mediator to continue the dialogue to reach an agreement by the time of its ordinary summit on 3 July. Subsequently, the President of the Transition issued two decrees, on 6 and 10 June, respectively, formalizing a 24-month extension of the transition from 26 March 2022 and establishing a commission to draw up a preliminary draft constitution, which must finalize its work within two months. The adoption of the draft electoral law — a process that is significantly supported by MINUSMA — is scheduled for this month and will lay the groundwork for the operationalization of the single independent electoral management body.

In the upcoming period, MINUSMA will continue its efforts to support a consensual way out of the crisis, including by assisting, as appropriate, in developing a detailed electoral timeline, establishing a robust monitoring mechanism and creating an atmosphere conducive to holding free, fair and credible elections. I would like to take this opportunity to again commend ECOWAS for its continued commitment to supporting a successful transition in Mali.

The prolonged uncertainty surrounding the duration of the transition has made it more difficult to make progress in other areas, leaving little political space for a sustained commitment to the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It is important to bear in mind that some of the crucial reforms envisaged in the peace process depend on the successful completion of the transition.

During the reporting period, efforts to move the peace process forward were further complicated by the lack of trust among the signatory parties, disputes over issues that are important, but not crucial to the process and the de facto paralysis of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, which has not met since October last year, depriving the parties and their partners of a structured forum for discussion to address challenges and find solutions.

In that context, MINUSMA and Algeria, as the lead country in the international mediation, have made sustained efforts to encourage the effective implementation of the peace agreement, in particular through the holding of several mediation meetings and continued interaction with the Malian Government and the other signatory parties. More specifically, the focus has been, and continues to be, on the organization of the high-level decision-making meeting agreed by the parties nine months ago, with the objective of finalizing the details of a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process on the basis of the Government's offer to integrate a total of 26,000 combatants into State structures and a common understanding of the broad outlines of the institutional reforms necessary to fully implement the peace agreement. The Mission fully supports the preparation of that meeting, and I hope that the parties will achieve the long-awaited progress in the peace process.

*(spoke in English)*

The security situation remains volatile and is of particular concern along the tri-border area and in the centre. Since the beginning of this year, we have seen a deterioration in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area, with consequent effects on the Ménaka and Gao regions. Attacks by the Islamic State in the Ménaka region have killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands of civilians. While those developments are connected to local trafficking dynamics, intercommunal differences and the lack of development opportunities, they are also taking place against a backdrop of the ongoing redeployment from Mali of Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force.

I was in Ménaka two weeks ago and saw first-hand the impact of that developing situation. My interlocutors did not rule out an attack on the town of Ménaka, where 5,000 internally displaced persons have been sheltering so far. Should such an attack come to pass, the MINUSMA base is likely to be perceived as the last

haven for civilians fleeing violence. With limited Malian forces in the area and only some 600 peacekeepers available to protect civilians, United Nations personnel and assets, MINUSMA's ability to mount an effective response is limited. We are making contingency plans to temporarily enhance our presence by relocating additional troops and capabilities, redistributing tasks to increase situational awareness and better protect civilians and improving our coordination with the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

Our ability to adjust quickly in response to the threat in Ménaka is one example of how the force and the MINUSMA police have become more proactive in their operations. Other examples include prioritizing the protection of civilians through long-range patrols, such as in Tessit and Talataye in the Gao region; establishing temporary operating bases in Ansongo, in the Gao region, and Ogossagou, in the Mopti region; and deploying quick-reaction forces and patrols along main roads and supply routes to ensure the freedom of movement and deter terrorist attacks on key infrastructure, including bridges. In that regard, I would like to honour the memory of all the peacekeepers who have lost their lives since the inception of the Mission. Their ultimate sacrifice illustrates the challenges and complexities we face and further underscores the need to ensure that the Mission has the requisite capabilities, including armed and utility helicopters.

In the centre, insecurity continues to be driven by a combination of intercommunal conflicts, long-standing governance issues and activity by violent extremists targeting civilians and their livelihoods, as well as the Malian Defence and Security Forces and MINUSMA. To address that situation, since late December the Malian army has significantly stepped up its military campaign with the aim of stabilizing the region, which is home to more than 30 per cent of the Malian population. While there has been undeniable improvement in some areas and a concomitant weakening of the extremist groups, those groups still continue to make frequent attacks on Malian and MINUSMA forces, as well as civilian populations suspected of collaborating with the Malian forces. Going forward, the success of the Malian-led operations will hinge on two critical factors.

First, the operations must be anchored in a comprehensive approach that addresses Mali's institutional, governance and socioeconomic challenges, which provide fertile ground for the spread of violent extremism. In that respect, progress has been made in

developing a Malian-led political strategy. MINUSMA is providing multifaceted support to that process while pursuing its efforts to foster local reconciliation and facilitate the extension of State authority and the delivery of basic services. In conjunction with the United Nations country team, we are also taking steps to align our activities with the Malian strategy, once it is formally adopted.

Secondly, military operations must be undertaken with due regard for human rights and international humanitarian law. That is not just a matter of ethics but one of operational efficacy, because the support of the local populations is vital to the success of the counter-insurgency. In that regard, I note with concern that some of the operations conducted during the period under review were marred by allegations of human rights violations. Overall, and based on our investigations from January to March of this year, there was a sharp increase in human rights abuses compared to the previous quarter. The list of presumed perpetrators of human rights abuses continues to be led by extremist groups but, unfortunately, we have also seen an increase in violations associated with operations by the Malian defence forces, allegedly supported by foreign security personnel in central Mali. In that context, we will continue to pay very close attention to monitoring the human rights situation and reporting on violations. We will also sustain our dialogue with the Malian authorities and enhance our capacity-building support and training for the Defence and Security Forces. In that regard, in 2021 the Mission delivered 122 training sessions benefiting a total of 3,269 Malian Defence and Security Forces personnel.

The overall security environment has compounded the humanitarian situation in the country. In 2022, 7.5 million people will require humanitarian assistance, compared with 5.9 million in 2021. The total number of internally displaced persons stands at 370,000, and more than 1.8 million people will be in immediate need of food assistance by August, the highest level recorded since 2014. The commendable efforts of the humanitarian actors to meet their needs are unfortunately hampered by the lack of adequate funding. So far, only 11.1 per cent of the \$686 million requested for 2022 has been mobilized.

In view of the challenges I have highlighted, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's acknowledgement of the need for MINUSMA's continued presence and his recommendation that its mandate be extended for

another year. We will take advantage of the proposed review to come up with proposals on the best way that MINUSMA can continue to deliver on its priorities in Mali and assess the level of our cooperation between the authorities and the Mission. That last point is important, as in recent months MINUSMA has experienced restrictions to its ground and air operations, as well as significant delays in the rotation of uniformed personnel from West Africa. I cannot emphasize enough how critical the freedom of movement is to achieving the desired level of effectiveness in support of Mali and its people. We will continue working constructively with our Malian partners on that issue with a view to resolving the existing problems.

While the challenges in Mali are numerous and complex, they are far from insurmountable. If anything, the Malian people, as demonstrated during the Assises nationales de la refondation, harbour deep aspirations for reform, transparent governance and accountability. Those aspirations and the forces driving them, including civil society, have shown great resilience and deserve the international community's full support.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Touré.

**Ms. Touré** (*spoke in French*): I thank the members for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council as a member of civil society on the general situation in my country, Mali.

This meeting is being held at a time when the people of Mali are facing many security, political, social, institutional and economic obstacles. In short, the population continues to pay a heavy price, as evidenced in the recent human rights reports of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and civil society organizations.

As a member of civil society, I remain concerned about the deteriorating diplomatic relations between Mali and its international partners. This is a worrisome situation, as our country should not be a battlefield between major Powers, for it is the people who bear the full brunt of the consequences of those tensions.

As the Council knows, on 6 June the transitional authorities set a time frame of 24 months, starting in March 2022, for the completion of the transition — a decision that certain political actors have characterized as unilateral and non-consensual. I am worried that this decision is being implemented in the context

of a divided political arena and a weak civil society due to the lack of dissenting voices in democratic and civic debate. Unfortunately, for several months we have been observing a shrinking democratic space and restricted freedom of speech and freedom of expression — sometimes followed by threats or intimidation.

I am very concerned about the security situation, which continues to worsen in the centre and north of the country, where the parties to the conflict, including terrorist armed groups, continue to commit grave violations and abuses against civilians. For several weeks, the village of Boni, in the Douentza region, has been under a blockade imposed by terrorist groups, in addition to the already blockaded Farabougou, in the Ségou region, and blockades elsewhere.

Moreover, armed confrontations between terrorist groups and other armed groups in the north of the country, especially in the regions of Ménaka and Gao, have led to massive population displacements. In all, the number of people displaced because of violence went from 350,110 in December 2021 to 370,548 in April 2022 — a 6 per cent increase.

In that context, I am very concerned that women, including young girls, are increasingly becoming victims of conflict-related or gender-based sexual violence. Women are no longer safe anywhere. Today, more than ever, we need to call on the transitional authorities to take women's rights seriously.

I am also concerned about the closure for nearly 10 years of 1,632 schools in the north and centre of the country, affecting more than 489,600 children, who have been deprived of their fundamental right to education and are now adolescents who have grown up in a violent environment without guidance or future prospects. They must choose to leave or stay. If they choose to leave, at great risk to their lives, they can either face the waves of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea by boat or venture off by foot and face the immense desert of the Sahel. Or they can stay and be subject to crime and armed groups.

I remain concerned about youth unemployment, which is a catalyst for social unrest and insecurity. The lack of economic development sets the stage for their easy recruitment by armed groups. In addition, the instrumentalization of young people for political ends is a breeding ground for the spread of violence. Youth employment must be a priority if we are to create

a propitious environment for sustainable development and peacebuilding.

I would also like to commend the recent victories of the Malian armed forces, which nevertheless raise some questions. While the security situation is stabilizing thanks to the various military operations of the Malian Defence and Security Forces and the procurement of military equipment, we do not know the cost of that equipment. An increase in the military budget must not impact the budget of other critical sectors such as education, health and access to water and electricity, which are also very important for the survival of the population. In that context, I would note that it is often the lack of access to those basic social services that creates conflict. If there can be no peace without development or development without peace, then there can be no peace or development without respect for the rule of law and human rights.

On the question of the sanctions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I note that it is the people who have borne the brunt of its effects. The people of Mali must confront this crisis on a daily basis. They must remain resilient in the face of insecurity, political crises, embargoes and the effects of climate change. But the sacrifices that our people are making for the good of the nation must not become a national badge of honour that makes us more receptive to suffering. The people are standing strong and are making many sacrifices, but they deserve to be given better living conditions. We regret the recent decisions of the World Bank and the African Development Bank to suspend funding for projects and programmes in Mali, because the direct beneficiaries of those funds are the people of Mali.

I would like to underline that general opinion in Mali is that Security Council meetings on Mali should not limit themselves to decisions and resolutions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations without those decisions leading to action on the ground. I therefore reiterate the recommendation of bolstering MINUSMA's mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter so that the Mission can fight terrorism alongside the Malian armed forces.

I call on the international community, the African Union, ECOWAS and the transitional Government to focus on the humanitarian and security emergency facing the Malian people and work together for the immediate lifting of sanctions. I urge the transitional authorities

to pursue dialogue with the international community, particularly ECOWAS, in the greater interests of the Malian people. I call on the international community to not turn its back on its obligation to help Mali because of the sanctions regime and the deteriorating diplomatic relations between Mali and some of its partners. I urge those partners to continue to support Mali in the implementation of reforms to consolidate the rule of law, good governance, democracy and the holding of credible elections. I call for a focus on sustainable development projects that make even the most remote communities autonomous and independent. Finally, on behalf of my country, I urge the partners and friends of Mali to help my country wage a more effective battle against terrorism.

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

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

Before giving the floor to the members of the Council, I want to mention that the High Representative of the Coalition for the Sahel, Mr. Djimé Adoum, is present in the Chamber.

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

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative and Ms. Touré for their briefings, and I welcome the presence of Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop. I also welcome the presence in the Chamber of Mr. Djimé Adoum, High Representative of the Coalition for the Sahel.

As we prepare to renew the mandate of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), we must be clear-eyed: the situation in Mali remains dire. Nearly 2 million people need food assistance, and one third of the population depends on humanitarian assistance. Terrorist groups continue their deadly operations. Violence against civilians is reaching unprecedented levels. In that connection, I would like to pay tribute to the three Blue Helmets and three humanitarian workers who lost their lives earlier this month.

In that challenging context, Mali still needs MINUSMA. France therefore intends to play its role

and propose that the Security Council renew the Mission's mandate for an additional year. However, for MINUSMA to deliver on its mandate, the Malian transitional authorities must also assume their responsibilities. The obstacles to MINUSMA's activities and troop rotations must stop. The authorities must also continue their dialogue with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose efforts we support.

The objective is to agree on a mutually acceptable timetable and specific commitments for a return to constitutional order, which is in the interests of the Malian people. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law must stop, and those responsible for such violations must be brought to justice. MINUSMA must be granted access to the areas concerned so that it may conduct its investigations and publish its reports in a timely manner.

At the same time, we hear Mali's calls for MINUSMA to be more effective and to support efforts to resume State and public services. Such demands are legitimate. MINUSMA must do better. In particular, it must provide more effective protection for civilians, and that requires reimagining the future. That is why we intend to propose, within the mandate renewal, to support the internal review envisaged by the Secretary-General, the objectives of which are to clarify relations with the host State and determine possible changes to the configuration of the Mission.

We would also like to keep at the core of the mandate support for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process. That agreement, we must not forget, is accepted by all parties and recognized by the international community. It therefore remains key to the stabilization of Mali. We remain convinced that it provides the appropriate framework for bringing about calm and lasting relations between the north and south of the country.

France will also propose to continue providing air support to MINUSMA under the new mandate. As the Secretary-General and troop-contributing countries have recalled, such support is necessary for MINUSMA and for the safety of the Blue Helmets. In northern Mali in particular, MINUSMA's presence plays an important role in assisting in the redeployment of the Malian State. Its presence is made possible by French air support. In the context of Operation Barkhane's departure from

Mali, France remains ready to provide that support from outside, within a clear legal framework that is accepted by Mali.

Lastly, we must not forget that the situation in Mali is part of a broader framework. At the level of the Sahel, the appropriate means must be found to enable African armed forces to unite in an effective fight against terrorism. Issues related to security, governance and development must be addressed simultaneously. That is precisely the purpose of the work of the Coalition for the Sahel.

France therefore expects all members of the Council to support the draft resolution we will circulate at the end of today's meeting. We are convinced that the unanimous agreement of the Council is again possible this year, and we intend to work with all Council members to that end.

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

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/446) and thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General El Ghassim Wane for his comprehensive briefing and insightful perspectives on the situation in Mali. His continuous engagement of regional actors, including through the pursuit of preventive diplomacy, as part of efforts in resolving the challenges in Mali is commendable.

We also welcome the participation in today's meeting of Sadya Touré, who spoke on behalf of the Founder and Executive Director of Mali Musso. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop of Mali at today's meeting.

Achieving peace and security remains one of the foremost priorities of the people of Mali, as well as of the entire continent of Africa. That much-desired goal can be realized only through the enhanced support and cooperation of all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. We therefore support the continuing and indispensable role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in sustaining the peace in Mali, and we look forward to the renewal of its mandate and renewed cooperation with the host country.

In the light of the complex political, security and humanitarian situation persisting in Mali, and mindful

of the urgent need to address the situation, the A3 would like to note the following points in the light of the report of the Secretary-General.

First, we remain concerned about the political situation in Mali, given both the slow progress in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the absence of an agreed transitional calendar for constitutional rule. That protracted situation could impact negatively on the stability of Mali.

We welcome the decision taken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at the Extraordinary Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Accra on 4 June, which encouraged dialogue with the ECOWAS Mediator with a view to finalizing discussions on reaching an acceptable timetable for a quick return to constitutional order. We urge the transitional authorities to continue to positively engage with ECOWAS on the matter before its next Ordinary Summit, to be held in July. We take note of the decision announced by the Malian authorities on 6 June to extend the transitional timelines to 24 months and hope that will not prejudice efforts by all parties towards seeking a mutually acceptable solution.

Secondly, despite the increasingly challenging security environment in Mali, MINUSMA continues to support security in many parts of the country where it has a presence. While counting on the support of the Council for the mandate renewal, the Mission must be made fit for purpose. In that regard, the Mission will benefit from stronger support for troop contributions, capacity-building on counter-terrorism measures and the provision of adequate logistics, including airlift assets. Those support enhancements are critical to the effectiveness of the Mission's adaptation plan.

The A3 would also like to underscore that, without cooperation from the host authorities, an appropriate mandate from the Council will not yield the required positive results. While there is a major crisis under way, as defenders of the Charter of the United Nations and of African sovereignty we remain guided by the need to reiterate respect for the sovereignty and political independence of Mali. We therefore reiterate the importance of renewed cooperation between the transitional authorities and the Mission. In particular, it is critical that the Government adhere to the status-of-forces agreement to which it has committed, which

should be done in a manner that enhances the coherence of objectives and actions for lasting peace in Mali.

Thirdly, the safety and security of United Nations peacekeeping troops in Mali is an issue of concern for the A3. The increasingly sophisticated and deadly attacks by terrorist groups against civilians and civilian objects and the Mission's personnel, particularly through the use of improvised explosive devices, indirect fire and rocket-propelled grenades, are alarming.

While acknowledging the efforts of the Malian army in addressing the security situation, we believe that a detailed assessment of the capacity gaps of United Nations troops and the Malian army would be useful in determining the appropriate strategies to be deployed in filling the gaps to help counter security threats against those who sacrifice their lives to guarantee the peace of others.

We pay tribute to the MINUSMA personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty and express our appreciation to the gallant personnel who continue to make sacrifices for the sake of achieving peace in Mali. Even as we call for more measures to protect peacekeepers, we urge that they be supported to be robust enough in their training, operational posture, force multipliers and intelligence assets in order to be able to protect civilians and fully implement the mandate.

Fourthly, we note the delay in the rotation of those troop-contributing countries whose troops have spent more than one year with MINUSMA, following the non-granting of flight permits. That development, which affects discipline, control and operational effectiveness, could have an adverse impact on the objectives of the Mission and the commitment of troop-contributing countries to the cause of peace in Mali. We therefore request that the Secretary-General resolve the matter with the transitional authorities as soon as possible.

Fifthly, the decision by Mali to withdraw from the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is regrettable, especially in the wake of the decisions to withdraw the French forces and other Western partners from Mali, which could create significant security gaps that should be addressed. It is our view that regional arrangements and mechanisms still provide the best opportunities to comprehensively address the security situation in the Sahel, including Mali. We therefore underscore the need for renewed cooperation,

coordination and complementary efforts between the actors and mechanisms operating in the region, such as MINUSMA, the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Nouakchott Process and the Accra Initiative, as well as individual Member States, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms.

We also remain anxious about the spillover effect of the protracted crisis in Libya on the Sahel, along with the possible return of foreign terrorist fighters and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We therefore urge for coordinated action in addressing the matter by the countries of the region, including with regard to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The question of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for regional security initiatives that respond to threats to international peace and security is a pressing matter on which we urge the Council to take a coherent position. We welcome the ongoing efforts of the African Union, the United Nations, ECOWAS and the G-5 Sahel in undertaking a joint strategic assessment on governance and security in the Sahel and appeal for the mobilization of requisite political, financial and technical support in order to facilitate its successful implementation.

Sixthly, we encourage greater attention to be given to addressing the root causes and drivers of terrorism in the Sahel. A major part of that is for the Government to win the faith of the population by embracing Mali's ethnic, regional and political diversity. During and after the transition to civilian rule, it will be critical to ensure that while undertaking military measures against terrorist groups the State combines them with an inclusive embrace of diversity. That is a critical foundation for countering terrorist, militant and spoiler groups while reinforcing the social contract between the State and the people. In that regard, we commend the Peacebuilding Commission for its interventions in Mali, including initiatives targeting women, young people and self-employment in the agricultural sector, and we encourage more efforts of that kind.

Lastly, the A3 condemns in the strongest terms the attacks by terrorists and armed groups on civilians on the territory of Mali, and the persistent abuses perpetrated against women, girls and children, including abductions, arbitrary detentions and sexual exploitation and abuse. We underscore that such acts are flagrant violations of international human rights law and therefore encourage the Malian authorities to carry out swift investigations that will enable the perpetrators of such atrocious



crimes to be prosecuted. A related concern involves the deteriorating humanitarian situation resulting from heightened levels of insecurity, as well as climate change, food insecurity and the coronavirus disease pandemic, contributing to an increase of more than 13,000 in the numbers of displaced persons over a three-month period. We therefore once again echo the Secretary-General's urgent appeal for donor support to fill the \$651 million gap in the humanitarian response plan for Mali.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance of strengthening cooperation and dialogue between the Malian authorities, the region, MINUSMA and all their international partners, and reaffirm our commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Mali. We therefore count on the support of all delegations in ensuring that the mandate of MINUSMA is renewed in a manner that enhances its robustness in addressing the security situation in Mali.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I welcome Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, to today's meeting. His presence and statement will help the Security Council to formulate a comprehensive and accurate picture of the situation in Mali, as well as the needs and concerns of the Malian side. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing, and I listened carefully to Ms. Touré's statement. It is clear from the briefings that the current situation in Mali is complex and complicated, owing to a number of factors. The international community should improve its strategic awareness, determine the deliverables, set priorities and provide constructive assistance in a targeted manner.

We should actively support Mali's counter-terrorism efforts. Terrorist forces have now spread from the Sahel region to the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region and even Southern Africa. Mali is on the front line of counter-terrorism in Africa and has recently had some success in implementing a series of counter-terrorism military operations. We should focus on the big picture and the overall challenges of countering terrorism in Africa, provide additional support to the Malian Government in terms of funding, equipment and intelligence and uphold the Malian Government's sovereign right to carry out security cooperation with its external counterparts. The countries of the Sahel region represent an indivisible security community. They should strengthen their unity and form synergies

in building a solid barrier against the terrorism. The Group of Five for the Sahel is an important mechanism for comprehensive regional counter-terrorism efforts, and we believe that it can play its role in full as long as it focuses on counter-terrorism and eliminates interferences. The joint African Union-United Nations Joint Strategic Assessment on Security in the Sahel should be dedicated to promoting regional solidarity and cooperation.

With regard to the human rights issues that some other speakers have mentioned, China believes that counter-terrorism actions should respect and protect human rights while opposing double standards on counter-terrorism and the politicization of human rights issues. China welcomes the close cooperation between the Malian Government and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the political transition. The Malian Government has recently announced a new transition period and has set out the goal of restoring constitutional order through the holding of elections. China has always supported African-led solutions to African problems and encourages the Malian Government accordingly. We have always advocated for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali and encourage the Government to continue its cooperation with ECOWAS to broaden consensus and reach agreement on issues related to the political transition so that the sanctions can ultimately be lifted and Mali can return to the ECOWAS family as soon as possible. The political transition is merely the first step. Mali still needs the international community's robust support in achieving lasting peace and security, implementing the outcomes of the national reconstruction conference and strengthening the country's governance capacity.

It is imperative to strengthen trust among the signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, reach agreement on outstanding issues by holding high-level meetings and promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the development of the country's northern regions. We should help Mali expand and restore State authority, alleviate the effects of the humanitarian crisis, foster the people's sense of ownership, eliminate the root causes of the conflict and lay the foundations for peace.

Under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has overcome difficulties and

challenges and actively discharged its responsibilities, which China fully acknowledges. The original purpose for which the Security Council established the Mission was to assist the Government in implementing the peace agreement and restoring State authority in the north, which should continue to be the Mission's top priority and the primary benchmark for the Council in reviewing its performance.

As one of the largest United Nations peacekeeping operations, MINUSMA must strengthen its communication and coordination with the country concerned and focus on the core mandate and pooled resources for their optimal use, based on Mali's needs.

The current priority is to make full use of existing resources in an effort to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The challenges facing the Mission in performing its duties cannot be solved by raising the troop ceiling alone, and neither can the expectations of the Malian Government be met in that way.

MINUSMA has suffered the highest number of casualties of all United Nations missions in recent years. While it is of course impossible for peacekeeping operations to be absolutely risk-free, we should do our best to minimize security risks. We hope that the Mission will take effective measures to address the outstanding risks to the safety of its peacekeepers.

MINUSMA has encountered a number of logistical difficulties in the implementation of its mandate. The Secretariat, the country concerned and the Mission should strengthen communication and coordination in order to properly resolve the problems facing the implementation of the status-of-forces agreement.

The United Nations is about to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Mission's work. During that process, it should fully heed the views of the host country, strengthen communication and consultations and align its work with Mali's needs and priorities.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): My delegation thanks Special Representative Wane for his useful and informative briefing and welcomes His Excellency Minister Diop as leader of the Malian delegation at this meeting of the Security Council. We also paid careful attention to the presentations by the civil society representative.

We received with dismay the news of the terrorist attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal on 1 June and in the vicinity of Douentza on 3 June. We regret the casualties among peacekeepers from Egypt and Jordan and express our sincere condolences to and solidarity with the Governments of both countries, as well as the victims' families and MINUSMA itself.

Brazil reiterates its firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. There is no justification for such acts. We support the efforts of the Malian armed forces to fight terrorism, as well as the initiative to improve communication with the local population to ensure support for military operations.

However, we consider it essential that the transitional authorities resume effective and close cooperation with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Moreover, the authorities should refrain from acts that may impose restrictions on MINUSMA's work, especially with regard to the freedom of movement and the rotation of contingencies. Such acts inevitably have an undesirable impact on the Mission's ground and air operations and ultimately affect the fulfilment of MINUSMA's mandate.

It is encouraging to see that the ceasefire and other provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are being respected despite the recent deterioration of the security situation. We encourage the Malian political forces to remain engaged in dialogue and seek a swift conclusion to the transition period by defining a realistic timetable.

In that regard, Brazil supports the decision of the Economic Community of West African States, at its recent summit of Heads of State and Government, to keep open the channels of dialogue with the transitional authorities. We welcome the efforts of mediator Goodluck Jonathan to find a solution to the impasse and urge the transitional authorities to cooperate with the regional organization so that sanctions can be lifted and Mali's relations with the countries of the region normalized as soon as possible.

Brazil also supports confidence-building measures among the Malian political forces. The return to democratic normality is a collective endeavour that must include women, young people and ethnic and religious minorities.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/446) contains worrisome information regarding the human rights situation. We reiterate our concern over reports of abuses and violations, especially those allegedly perpetrated by members of the Malian armed forces and foreign combatants. Those reports must be investigated transparently and promptly.

Restrictions on civil society and the freedom of expression are also deeply unsettling. Censorship and the persecution of opponents are incompatible with a democratic and pluralistic society and lead to the erosion of hard-won progress in the country's stabilization. We urge the transitional authorities to refrain from actions that limit civic space, while reaffirming their commitment to a prompt return to the constitutional framework.

This month, the Security Council will renew MINUSMA's mandate. Brazil is ready to engage constructively in negotiations to ensure that the Mission is up to the challenges posed by the deterioration of the security conditions in Mali, especially following the withdrawal of French troops.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing today. I would especially like to thank Ms. Touré for her important yet troubling observations about the serious challenges facing the people of Mali, in particular women and young people, as well as the dire need for the Government to more effectively provide basic services to its people. I also welcome Foreign Minister Diop to today's briefing. My delegation appreciates his attendance, given the importance of the mandate renewal.

Let me begin, as others have, by expressing our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families and friends of the Egyptian and Jordanian peacekeepers and International Committee of the Red Cross workers who were killed and wounded in attacks two weeks ago. The United States condemns, in the strongest terms, all attacks against civilians and peacekeepers.

We also condemn the misinformation and disinformation campaigns that threaten the safety and security of peacekeepers and hinder the ability of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to fully carry out its mandate to support the people of Mali.

We reiterate the decision of the Security Council that those involved in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers, as well as those planning, directing or committing acts in Mali that constitute human rights abuses or violations, including those involving the targeting of civilians, may be subject to sanctions.

MINUSMA's nearly decade-long presence in support of peace is an expression of international solidarity with Malians. The United States looks forward to discussions with our colleagues in the Security Council to renew the mandate for MINUSMA, which protects civilians, makes a difference in the lives of the Malian people and advances the international community's goal for a peaceful, stable and secure Mali and Sahel region.

As we discuss MINUSMA's support to the people of Mali, I have three key messages today.

First, the success of any peacekeeping mission hinges on the commitment of the parties to advance and pursue sustainable political solutions. As the Council has stated previously, it is urgent that the Malian authorities demonstrate their commitment to implement the Algiers accords. We regret to note that the Comité de suivi de l'accord has not met since October.

It is equally urgent that the Malian authorities restore constitutional rule by holding timely elections. We welcome the continued engagement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the Malian authorities to support efforts to restore constitutional rule. We encourage the transitional Government to continue to be responsive to ECOWAS. The United States acknowledges the announcement by Mali's transition Government of a 24-month transition timetable, starting in March 2022. We do not endorse that timeline as final, but we acknowledge that it responds to the Council's call for a clear and unambiguous commitment to a transition timeline. We urge Mali and ECOWAS to reach agreement in particular on a robust monitoring mechanism with tangible benchmarks for the remainder of the transition. Transparent and inclusive processes that respect diverse perspectives and freedoms will be critical to building a strong foundation for the future.

Secondly, we are deeply troubled by the recent report of MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights detailing the human rights crisis in Mali. The report

documents a dramatic increase in human rights violations and abuses against civilians by both terrorist groups and the Malian armed forces with “foreign security personnel”, otherwise known to most of the world as the Kremlin-linked Wagner Group forces. The Malian authorities are fully responsible for the actions of their security partners. Last March, reports emerged about the horrific massacre and mass graves in Moura. The Malian authorities have still refused to allow MINUSMA access to the site to conduct an independent investigation. That is unacceptable. MINUSMA must have immediate access to all sites of reported attacks to conduct the investigations, which are mandated by the Council itself.

The alarming increase in allegations of human rights abuses and violations is exactly why the United States continues to warn countries against partnering with the Russian-backed Wagner Group, whose forces are widely reported to commit egregious human rights abuses everywhere they deploy. The Wagner Group will not bring peace to Mali. Instead, the Wagner Group will only divert natural and economic resources away from Mali’s fight against terrorism.

Thirdly and lastly, Mali must allow MINUSMA to do its job. As the Council stated previously, the transitional Government must respect the status-of-forces agreement. Restricting MINUSMA flights, movements or access, especially over vast swaths of central Mali, limits MINUSMA’s ability to anticipate, deter and effectively respond to threats and to protect civilians. MINUSMA’s inability to fully operate due to Mali’s restrictions leaves Mali vulnerable. We urge the transition Government to fully support and coordinate with MINUSMA. The Mission is there specifically at the request of the Malian authorities to help extend State authority, mitigate intercommunal violence and deter the ability of terrorists to harm civilians.

The United States stands ready to continue its support for the people of Mali and for MINUSMA. We are committed to the stability and security of Mali and the Sahel region.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Wane and Ms. Sadya Touré for their briefings. I extend the warmest welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop.

I begin by expressing my country’s condolences to the families of the peacekeepers of the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who lost their lives in recent weeks. We call on the Malian authorities to investigate those regrettable attacks and to identify the perpetrators in order to proceed in accordance with international law.

Over the past months, the lack of an agreement on the terms of the political transition has led to significant delays on key issues, notably the stalemate over the peace agreement.

Mexico has taken note of the decision of the Malian authorities to complete the transition within 24 months. We now urge the transition Government to step up its contacts with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) so that a compromise can be reached to ensure that inclusive, fair and credible elections can be held without delay at the end of that period.

Agreement with ECOWAS is also indispensable for the gradual lifting of regional sanctions. My country believes that it is a priority to agree on an end to such measures, which affect the daily lives of Malians and the prospects for economic recovery in the region as a whole.

On security, we acknowledge the efforts of the Malian authorities to combat terrorism, and we reiterate our call for that fight to take place in the context of respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Mexico expresses its deep concern over reports of human rights violations and trusts that the Malian Government will fulfil its obligation to investigate and, as appropriate, punish those responsible for such deplorable events as those recorded in Moura. In that regard, we recall that MINUSMA can contribute to that task and request the authorities to cooperate with the Mission in that area of human rights.

Violence by armed groups remains the main threat to the Malian civilian population. At the same time, we believe that an active military response is not enough to eradicate it. The deployment of the State’s welfare drive, in particular through basic services, and regional involvement are also vital elements in containing the violence.

Regional cooperation is the only way to improve border controls and stop illicit arms trafficking in the Sahel. We urge the African Union and ECOWAS to support measures to prevent Mali from serving as a hub

for arms transfers between North Africa and the Gulf of Guinea.

Mali's decision to withdraw from the Group of Five for the Sahel complicates the situation. We call on the authorities to find regional cooperation frameworks to respond to the transnational challenges affecting the entire Sahel.

Mexico supports the work of MINUSMA and believes that the Council's unanimous support in the renewal of its mandate is indispensable. It is urgent that the Mission adapt to the new security situation prevailing in Mali and, to that end, the Council must ensure that it has the necessary capabilities.

For MINUSMA to fulfil its objective of stabilizing Mali, it is also vital that the national authorities respect the status-of-forces agreement and guarantee the Mission's freedom of movement and the regular rotation of its personnel.

If we really want the situation in Mali to improve, a united Security Council will have to strengthen MINUSMA's mandate.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Special Representative El Ghassim Wane for his comprehensive briefing and commend him and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for their tireless efforts in support of peace and stability in Mali. We also listened carefully to Ms. Sadya Touré. We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Mali's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in today's meeting.

The United Arab Emirates is closely following the situation in Mali and the wider Sahel region. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situation. However, we believe that intensified national and regional efforts, coupled with strong international support, can enable Mali to address those challenges and ultimately allow Malians to live in peace.

The security situation remains deeply concerning, especially in the context of the increased transnational threat that terrorist groups pose to the security and stability of Mali and the wider region. Despite significant counter-terrorism efforts, they continue to expand their control and launch sophisticated attacks, causing serious harm to civilians and peacekeeping forces. The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns

those attacks and calls for all the perpetrators to be held accountable. We would also like to express our sincere condolences to the Governments of Jordan and Egypt and the families of the peacekeeping victims of the recent attacks.

Tackling security issues in Mali requires a two-pronged approach, focusing on ensuring the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel alongside MINUSMA's stabilization efforts. In that regard, we look forward to learning more from the Secretary-General's upcoming analysis and recommendations over the next six months on how to ensure that MINUSMA's mission is fit for purpose in its current operating environment. We continue to support the Secretary-General's recommendation to renew MINUSMA's mandate for another year, and we look forward to engaging constructively with other Council members to negotiate its mandate.

In terms of the political process, the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/446), as well as the outcome of the most recent meeting of the Economic Community of West African States, makes it clear that Mali is at a critical juncture. Continued dialogue and engagement among the country's key stakeholders, as well as regional and international actors, remains vital at this moment, while continued commitment to the key tenets of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is essential to supporting stability and recovery in Mali, along with a focus on the strategy prioritizing the challenges in the country's centre. Progress on the political transition will be critical as well, and we stress the importance of ensuring the inclusive participation of communities. We encourage Mali to redouble its efforts to advance the political process and to remain steadfast in its commitment to building a country that meets the aspirations of its people.

I would like to highlight that the humanitarian situation and food insecurity in Mali is another issue requiring the Council's urgent attention. According to the Secretary-General's report, more than 7.5 million people are in urgent need of assistance in Mali and more than 960,000 children under five are at risk of acute malnutrition. The situation is untenable. Regular updates to the Council should include forecasts of expected hunger levels and the implications for local communities, especially for their most vulnerable members, such as women and children, so that the Council can support early action. Furthermore, the dire humanitarian situation in Mali is exacerbated by the

country's vulnerability to climate change. We believe that part of the response to that dual threat demands that the Council encourage climate finance actors to increase support for food and water investments in Mali. At the moment, highly fragile countries receive only \$2 per capita of climate finance, despite the fact that such finance offers very high returns on stability and early recovery. We also welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's efforts to increase the use of renewable energy where it can reduce costs and security risks, as well as to foster a positive legacy for host communities.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its continued support for Mali on its path towards peace, stability and prosperity.

**Ms. Byrne Nason** (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Wane, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing this morning, and I am particularly grateful to Ms. Touré for her informative and relevant comments. I also recognize the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali. We welcome him to this meeting, as we do the presence in the Chamber of High Representative Adoum.

Let me begin by expressing my deepest condolences on behalf of Ireland to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and to the families of the peacekeepers who recently lost their lives in Mali. We also wish a speedy recovery to the wounded. I commend the peacekeepers of MINUSMA and its leadership and staff on their continued commitment and service to the people of Mali. Their work has never been more challenging or more essential. We call on the Malian authorities to fulfil their obligations as a matter of urgency in order to facilitate MINUSMA's critical work. We also call for respect for the status-of-forces agreement.

(*spoke in English*)

The restrictions that have been placed on MINUSMA's human rights reporting and investigative tasks are particularly worrying. That is taking place in an environment where civilians are under attack on all fronts — from jihadists, militias, self-defence groups and occasionally the Malian armed forces. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/446) highlights a significant surge in human rights abuses and violations, yet we know that there are thousands of other Malians

suffering injustice whose stories we will never hear. It is notable that the increase in documented violations attributed to the Malian Defence and Security Forces has occurred since the recent establishment of partnerships with foreign security personnel, including reportedly the Wagner Group. The Malian authorities must take immediate action to address this, including by ensuring the protection of people from all ethnic groups and compliance with international law by all security partners.

All of us should be deeply concerned about the fact that the Mission has recorded a threefold increase in the number of civilians killed in the first quarter of the year. That is 543 lives lost to violence in just three months. Of those, 249 were killed by the Malian armed forces, the very people meant to protect them. We call for all allegations of civilian murders, human rights abuses and violations to be investigated promptly, transparently and thoroughly, and for the perpetrators to be held to account. Sustainable progress in counter-terrorism can be achieved only through respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Otherwise, these operations risk perpetuating the cycle of violence and amplifying the very problem they were intended to resolve.

The Malian people are also suffering from an acute humanitarian crisis. One in four are food insecure, and that number is only likely to rise as we enter the lean season and as the effects of climate change continue to worsen. At this time of crisis, unhindered humanitarian access to all parts of Mali must be guaranteed, humanitarian workers must be protected and humanitarian principles must be respected. We were appalled by the recent killing of two Red Cross workers in Kayes and offer our sincere condolences to their families and colleagues.

(*spoke in French*)

Political stability is essential to addressing the humanitarian, security and human rights crises in Mali. That requires an agreement on a timetable for a return to constitutional order and the holding of free, fair and inclusive elections. We acknowledge the establishment of a committee to draft a new constitution. We encourage the Malian authorities to engage constructively with the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations. Regional cooperation remains crucial, and we regret Mali's withdrawal from the Group of Five for the Sahel.

While discussions on the transition and elections are ongoing, the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must not be forgotten. The slow progress in implementing the agreement, including the complete lack of progress on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, threatens hard-won gains. Women's participation remains essential, and we welcome the addition of 15 women to the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of MINUSMA and regional actors, as well as humanitarian personnel, civil society actors and journalists in Mali, all of whom are operating in an increasingly difficult context. We look forward to working with all Council members this month to adopt a mandate for our peacekeepers — one that is clear, credible and realistic and allows MINUSMA to contribute to the protection and stability that the Malian people deserve.

**Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway): I thank the briefers for their insights. We also welcome Foreign Minister Diop's presence, as well as that of Mr. Djimé Adoum, High Representative of the Coalition for the Sahel. Special Representative Wane's remarks are, in essence, a tale of a United Nations that remains committed to Mali despite the hardships. It is with sorrow, again, that we pay tribute to our colleagues in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who recently made the ultimate sacrifice. We also remind the host country of its responsibilities. That includes timely rotations for all United Nations personnel.

Almost two years after the military took power by force in Mali, the political, security and humanitarian crises persist. We are deeply worried about the reported increase in human rights violations and abuses committed, including by Malian armed forces and the Wagner Group. In paragraph 32 of his most recent report (S/2022/446), the Secretary-General notes "the highest number of civilian casualties to date recorded in Mali", including due to terrorist and armed group attacks.

We note with concern that reports from Moura indicate an ethnic dimension, with most victims coming from the pastoralists Fulani ethnic groups. In accordance with its mandate, MINUSMA should be given full and unrestricted access to investigate what took place in Moura and elsewhere.

We remain particularly alarmed by the increase in grave violations against children, which must end now. The protection of civilians must be at the core of interventions. We call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international law. The lack of protection will only further fuel violence and displacement.

For Mali to be able to move forward, at least three things must happen, without delay.

First, we have taken note of Mali's announced 24-month extension of the transition period. Agreement must urgently be reached with the Economic Community of West African States in order to ensure a return to constitutional order in a way that can be monitored.

Secondly, progress must be made on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which is fundamental to maintaining stability in the whole country.

Thirdly, State presence and basic services must be ensured, including in the north. As Ms. Sadya Touré explained to us today and as resolution 2601 (2021) makes clear, education, including for girls, simply cannot be ignored in any efforts for progress and prosperity.

We embark upon MINUSMA's mandate renewal as the Mission is more troubled and more crucial than ever. We must collectively consolidate its mandate, including through an increase in the Mission's troop ceiling, in order to allow for better protection of civilians. Norway also sees the need for a more robust and cross-border effort. That is why we are in favour of a United Nations support office for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

Realistically, however, we see limitations to what robustness could be achieved within MINUSMA as a country-specific United Nations peacekeeping mission. We should therefore renew MINUSMA's mandate, but urge the United Nations-African Union (AU) joint strategic assessment on security in the Sahel to arrive at clear recommendations quickly. It should include a thorough discussion on the need for a robust, regionally led, cross-border, counter-terrorism force to address the increasing challenge from terrorism in Mali and the wider region.

Such discussions also cannot shy away from critical issues, such as predictable and sustainable financing and human rights compliance. AU-led peace

enforcement operations in Somalia demonstrate that solutions are possible. Norway will support both the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate and efforts to seek wider Sahel solutions.

**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. I also thank Ms. Sadya Touré for her insights. I welcome the presence of His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mali at today's meeting. His presence is a testimony to the importance Mali attaches to our discussions.

The increase in the frequency of attacks against United Nations peacekeepers is of alarming concern. We express our condolences for the deaths of the Egyptian and Jordanian peacekeepers who lost their lives earlier this month in attacks against MINUSMA. Such attacks deserve the Security Council's strongest condemnation, and we call for swift action on part of all stakeholders for the expeditious implementation of the provisions of the resolution 2589 (2021) in order to bring the culprits to justice and ensure accountability for crimes against United Nations peacekeepers.

The transitional road map is the sine qua non for securing peace in Mali. The lack of clear understanding on the transitional road map to restore constitutional order is having an adverse impact on MINUSMA's activities, as well as on the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We appreciate the ongoing engagement between the Economic Community of West African States and the Malian transitional authorities and hope for a swift understanding on the transitional road map, including on a monitoring mechanism. That road map needs to be realistic and objective, while factoring in genuine operational challenges.

The continuous attack on MINUSMA peacekeepers, civilians and security forces in Mali demonstrates the grave security threat posed by terrorist groups such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam waal-Muslimin and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, some of whom are inspired by the terrorist ideologies of Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Those terrorist groups continue to expand their operations — not only in Mali and the Sahel region but also in other regions of the African continent.

The tri-border region of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso has become a hotspot of terrorist groups due to the security vacuum created by the departure of international forces. That situation is further complicated by the lack of cooperation among the internal stakeholders of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

In that context, let me submit five issues for the Council's consideration.

First, the challenge of terrorism in Mali needs to be accorded high priority and treated with the same level of urgency as other global hotspots that face the scourge of international terrorism. In that regard, it is important that G-5 Sahel countries resolve their differences expeditiously in order to enable the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel to resume its operations.

Secondly, the crisis in Mali has systemic multidimensional challenges. The long-standing shortcomings in the administrative, constitutional and security set up cannot be addressed in the absence of political stability. We hope the agreement on the transitional road map will pave the way for an effective implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, including administrative and electoral reforms, leading to an inclusive election in the agreed time frame. We need to encourage all Malian and regional stakeholders to take concerted actions in that regard.

Thirdly, a lasting solution to the Malian crisis can be achieved only through a Mali-owned and -led process that is inclusive and representative. It is our hope that the people of Mali will overcome the political crisis through inclusive dialogue and democratic processes.

Fourthly, the role of MINUSMA remains critical in helping Mali to achieve stability. The Mission continues to operate in an increasingly dangerous asymmetrical threat environment. While we appreciate the efforts taken to address the safety and security issues concerning United Nations peacekeepers, it is equally important not to burden MINUSMA directly with counter-terrorism operations. Such counter-terrorism operations need to be undertaken by the national security forces, which command a better understanding of the terrain and local dynamics. In that regard, we note the recent efforts made by the Malian security forces in the past months.

Fifthly, we have also noted the concerns raised by MINUSMA with respect to the capacity gaps arising



due to the withdrawal of international forces. The safety and security of peacekeepers is of the utmost priority for us. We therefore we see value in augmenting the troop ceiling, as proposed by the Secretary-General in July 2021, so that MINUSMA is able to protect its personnel, convoys and camps and deliver its mandate effectively. However, such augmentation should be supported by providing MINUSMA adequate additional resources.

In conclusion, India continues to remain closely engaged with Mali in numerous capacity-building programmes, such as scholarships for higher studies and professional training in India, including in defence and security-related areas. India remains steadfast in supporting the people of Mali in their quest for enduring peace, security and development. It is important that the international community stand in solidarity with the people of Mali in these challenging times.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his update and to echo the condolences expressed by others regarding the recent deaths of Egyptian and Jordanian peacekeepers in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We pay tribute to their courage and sacrifice. I also welcome the vital perspective of Ms. Touré on the challenges facing young people and girls.

The previous time that the Security Council met to discuss Mali (see S/PV.9012), reports had just emerged of a massacre in Moura. Hundreds of civilians were reportedly killed during a counter-terrorism operation backed by Wagner Group mercenaries. At the time, many members urged the Malian authorities to afford MINUSMA immediate, unhindered access to conduct an independent investigation. More than two months have passed, and MINUSMA continues to be denied access to the area.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about this and many other instances of restrictions imposed by the Malian authorities on MINUSMA, especially on aerial movements. Restrictions on free movement and status-of-forces agreement violations hinder the Mission's ability to deliver its mandate and could jeopardize safety and security.

MINUSMA's most recent quarterly human rights report is clear — the incident in Moura was not a one-off event. While we continue to be deeply concerned about the escalation of terrorist violence and abuses against civilians, the report also documents a significant

increase in human rights violations by the Malian Defence and Security Forces, with the involvement of so-called foreign military elements. Members of the Council are under no illusions: that is the Russian-backed Wagner Group.

Counter-terrorism operations must be conducted in full compliance with international human rights standards and international humanitarian law. Continued violations only risk fuelling the cycle of violence. It is in Mali's own interests to allow professional United Nations investigators to operate freely.

The root causes of conflict and insecurity in Mali must be addressed. An inclusive political transition is essential. We note the recent statement by the authorities on their preferred timeline. We strongly encourage the Malian authorities to continue dialogue with the Economic Community of West African States so that an agreement can be reached.

The recent visit by Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths again highlighted Mali's worsening humanitarian crisis, which continues to disproportionately affect women and girls. Increased violence in Ménaka is causing mass displacement, a spike in humanitarian needs and severe risks to civilians. The United Kingdom commends the vital work of humanitarian organizations and, following the shocking attack on two Red Cross workers on 1 June, we reiterate that aid workers must not be targeted. We call for full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Finally, we support the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate later this month. However, as we enter negotiations, the Council needs a frank conversation about what the political, human rights and security developments of recent months mean for the future of the Mission. Simply maintaining the status quo is not tenable. We therefore support the Secretary-General's proposal for a review to consider how best MINUSMA can continue to deliver on its priorities. We look forward to working with France and other colleagues on that important mandate renewal.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General El Ghassim Wane for his briefing on the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and recent developments in the country.

We welcome Ms. Sadya Touré and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, to today's meeting.

We believe that the only way for Malians to surmount the current challenges is through the establishment of internal political stability and security in the country. The more territory that is under the control of the State, the more effective counter-terrorism efforts will be and the better protected the people of the country will be.

We note that the focus of the transitional authorities is on gradually and consistently resolving accumulated issues. The restoration of constitutional order is without a doubt a priority. We note the decision of the Government of Mali to establish a timeline for the transitional period of 24 months, beginning on 26 March. That step is an optimal compromise, which in our view should receive the serious consideration of colleagues from the Economic Community of West African States.

We advocate the continuation of dialogue between Bamako and the Economic Community of West African States, since that will help to ensure the lifting of regional sanctions, which have caused suffering for both the population of Mali and the countries that have imposed the restrictions. We believe that the authorities and the people of Mali should maintain control over issues related to the transitional period. The hasty organization of elections, under external pressure and without taking into account the difficult security situation, would not result in the restoration of constitutional order but would instead lead to further destabilization.

We support the commitment of Bamako to implement the 2015 Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which is the bedrock for achieving lasting peace and national harmony. Recent pauses in the implementation of the Agreement, including the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, are linked to the need to address the top priority, which is to ensure security.

We fully support the current Malian authorities in their view that security is the absolute top priority for the transitional period. The withdrawal from Mali of both the French Operation Barkhane contingent and the European Takuba Task Force, without prior coordination with the Malians, has created an additional threat to internal stability.

Mali's intention to seek possible military technical support from other external players, including the Russian Federation, is fully understandable. Such cooperation has already yielded benefits. In late March, Malian armed forces conducted a successful military operation in the centre of the country, during which more than 200 Islamic fighters were neutralized. The northern and eastern parts of the country are also being gradually liberated from those armed groups.

We would like to recall that Russian-Malian cooperation, including at the military level, has a long-standing history, as is the case with other African States, and we have not received any complaints from our African partners in that regard. We note the very negative response of the West to strengthened Russian-Malian military cooperation, which we see as another manifestation of neocolonialist approaches and double standards.

Unscrupulous insinuations have been made about so-called massacres perpetrated by the Malian armed forces, with the complicity of Russian military instructors, against civilians in Moura. Disinformation has also been spread about mass graves near Gossi. I would like to recall that Russia raised that issue in the Security Council, and we were promised evidence. But ultimately no coherent information was provided, except for blurred photographs that show virtually nothing and a few social media posts. That is all the evidence that could be provided.

We support the investigation conducted by the Malians into all the circumstances surrounding those events. In response to the remarks of our colleagues, I would like to reiterate the following points, which we have made on several occasions.

Many private military companies operate in Africa, including West Africa. The market for military services in the region has long been the preserve of Western private military companies, many of which, according to media reports, including British mercenaries, have been involved in attempted coups and other sordid activities.

The fact is that many African States have agreed contracts with private military companies, which they have the sovereign right to do. We wish to reiterate a point we have made repeatedly at many Security Council meetings, which is that any and all States have the right to determine how they will provide for their own security. That is understandable given that there

is no certainty that someone else will address it on their behalf.

I would like to recall that Mali, and the entire Sahel region, is a victim of the irresponsible, unjustified and Council-unauthorized intervention in Libya in 2011. Those actions were the reason that the region became the target of banditry and terrorism. It is not only us, but also the countries of the Sahel, that say that. Why have countries in the Sahel become so vulnerable? For example, Mali had one of Africa's great civilizations, a centre of learning and trade. The reasons largely lie in the colonial past, which unfortunately never completely disappeared even after the countries of the region won their independence. It was replaced by so-called domination by contract, whose main purpose is to maintain the levers of political and economic control. As a result, most States were never granted the ability to provide security and dignified living conditions throughout their territories. To be fair, we should point out that after the crisis in Libya that the West itself created, the international community has tried to help the Sahel. But how effective has that help been? Foreign troops came into the region, lofty announcements followed about helping in the fight against terrorism. Yet the situation has become even more unstable and continues to deteriorate.

And what happened when Mali questioned that approach? We should point out that such attitudes are also gaining ground in other countries of the region. Sanctions have ensued, development assistance has been cut off, there have been accusations of human rights violations and vilification in the Western press. What is particularly sad is that neighbours have been antagonized as some have been portrayed in a better light than others. So apparently one country is fighting terrorism the right way, with the help of its so-called democratic partners, while others, it is claimed, are too harsh — and they cooperate with Russia.

There is only one answer to this, which is that it is more important for the West to maintain its spheres of influence than to actually help Africans solve their problems. In that regard, we are sorry to see external actors using their influence to pressure the Malian side through multilateral mechanisms, including the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Unfortunately, as a result of its internal disagreements, Bamako felt obliged to pull out of it. But we in Russia firmly believe that the main role in maintaining peace and security in the Sahelo-Saharan region should belong

to Sahelians themselves. We support the States of the region in pursuing genuine independent policies to resolve the relevant issues, based on the principle of African solutions to African problems. We are certain that results can be obtained if the African countries are allowed to find an effective response for themselves to the terrorist challenge through mutual respect and by rebuilding trust, without outside pressure.

In conclusion, we support the work of MINUSMA and pay tribute to the Blue Helmets operating in the difficult conditions created by asymmetric threats and especially to those who have paid the ultimate price. The situation in the country remains volatile, with many issues still in flux and undefined. In that regard, we do not believe that it is appropriate or the right time to make any serious changes to MINUSMA's mandate and to burden the Mission with new tasks, especially any that would go beyond the principles of peacekeeping and cooperative relations with the host country. We support the Secretary-General's proposal to undertake an assessment of the modalities of MINUSMA's work over the next six months, after which we could consider some modifications, if necessary.

In this very difficult situation, it is essential to continue effective assistance to the Malian authorities while encouraging them to pursue a balanced and carefully judged policy for resolving the crisis in their country. We urge all of our Security Council colleagues in that effort. We are ready to cooperate closely with them in the interests of speedily normalizing the situation in Mali and achieving lasting peace and stability throughout the Sahel-Saharan region.

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

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for briefing the Security Council. I also want to commend the work carried out by all the peacekeepers and personnel of the Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), who are operating in extremely challenging conditions. I want to thank Ms. Touré for her insightful remarks, and we welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali. I would now like to make three points.

First, we strongly condemn the recent attacks on the personnel of MINUSMA and the International Committee of the Red Cross that resulted in the death of

three Egyptian and Jordanian peacekeepers and two aid workers. We express our condolences to the families of the victims and the Governments of Egypt and Jordan. We call on the Malian authorities to investigate those attacks and hold the perpetrators to account.

The security situation in Mali is dire and remains a major challenge to the country's stability. The continued offensives by jihadist groups have amplified the humanitarian crisis, as Under-Secretary-General Griffiths rightly highlighted following his visit to Mali. With regard to the decision by the Malian authorities to delay the return to civilian rule by 24 months beginning in March, we believe that there is a need for dialogue, and we commend the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to engage with the Malian authorities on finding a mutually agreed timeline. It is vital to reach a swift resolution of the political deadlock between Bamako and ECOWAS.

Mali needs a clear road map towards the restoration of constitutional order. Malian civil society is central to rebuilding the transition and democracy, and as Ms. Touré underlined, it must be properly included in any transition plan that the Malian authorities develop. We are concerned about the impact that the conflict is having, especially on women and girls, and about the fact that more than 1,600 schools have been closed.

Secondly, we are deeply disturbed by the reports documented by MINUSMA of human rights violation and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, representing a 150 per cent increase from the previous year. That trend has particularly grown since the arrival of the Wagner Group.

Thirdly, we echo the Secretary-General's belief that MINUSMA's presence remains as necessary as ever. As its mandate renewal approaches, we hope that the Council can reach a consensus that reflects the current challenges facing MINUSMA and strengthen its focus on protecting civilians and promoting the peace dividends of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. In that regard, we call on the Malian authorities to allow MINUSMA full, unrestricted and unhindered access so that it can fully implement its mandate and conduct investigations.

In conclusion, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative on conducting a thorough analysis of how MINUSMA can best continue to deliver on its priorities to facilitate stability in Mali, and we look forward

eagerly to his recommendations to the Council in six months.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to once again draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507), which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

**Mr. Diop (Mali)** (*spoke in French*): I would like to acknowledge the presence of the representative of Malian civil society. At the outset, on behalf of the Government and the people of Mali, I thank the United Nations for its efforts and for the sacrifices it has often made in restoring peace and stability to my country. I also thank my brother Mr. El Ghassim Wane, Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/446).

At the outset, I would like to firmly emphasize that Mali, a country at war with terrorism and insecurity, continues to face a multidimensional crisis following the intervention in Libya, which caused it to lose two thirds of its territory. Despite the international support Mali has received since 2013, unfortunately the security situation has only worsened. The insecurity that had been localized in the north of Mali spread to its centre, before proliferating throughout the country and beyond into its neighbours and even into some coastal States.

That means that the results achieved have not met the expectations of the Malian people, or those of the people of the region. To reverse that trend, the Malian people decided to take their destiny into their own hands and play their part to the full. To that end, the Government of Mali has developed strategies and made enormous sacrifices by investing massively in its defence and security apparatus. That investment has enabled the Malian armed forces to grow in strength, with remarkable results on the ground, as recognized by the Malian people.

I listened carefully to the observations made here today, and I would now like to respond, on behalf of

the Government of Mali, to the report of the Secretary-General and the statements made by Security Council members, several of whom have stressed the need for the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which emerged from the Algiers process.

I would like to begin by highlighting the Government of Mali's surprise at the fact that the report notes that the signatory movements have denounced the Government's special recruitment of 2,000 new elements to be deployed to the Malian armed forces in the northern and central regions of the country. The Government has not in fact received any complaints from any group or group of movements in that regard.

However, I would like to reassure the Council that the special recruitment initiated by the general staff of the Malian armed forces is aimed at elements of self-defence groups, as well as the recovery of weapons, with the ultimate objective of reducing violence in their localities. In no way does that recruitment interfere with the Agreement's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, which concerns combatants from movements who signed the Agreement and are already registered in the database of the national commission on DDR.

The Government of Mali wishes to make it clear that it remains fully committed to the diligent and intelligent implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process. In that regard, we recall that from the time of its signature to the present day, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Agreement, particularly on the political, security, development, justice and reconciliation fronts.

The recommendations of the National Refoundation Conference, held in December 2021, form part of the Government's commitment to implementing the Agreement, in particular those related to the drafting of a new Constitution in order, among other things, to establish the Senate and accelerate the State decentralization and deconcentration process. I cannot neglect to mention the progress made in the DDR process, as the Special Representative also mentioned, as well as the increasingly significant participation of women in the peace process, including at the level of the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

I would like to once again commend Algeria for its active role and to thank all the countries participating in the international mediation team for their support.

With regard to the security situation, the Government wishes to underscore that, with the increased strength of the Malian armed forces, convincing results have been recorded on the ground, in particular with regard to the neutralization of prominent members of Katibat terrorist groups; the recovery of equipment; the liberation of local communities from the control of terrorists; the destruction of terrorist sanctuaries; and the return of displaced populations.

Another result of the increased strength of the national armed forces, which the Malian people have welcomed, there has been a marked improvement in the political, security and humanitarian situation since December 2021, as well as a significant reduction in intercommunal violence in the centre of the country.

The Government wishes to reassure the Council that the increased strength of the Malian armed forces has enabled them to adapt to the evolving security situation on the ground. Steps have been taken to ensure that there will be no security vacuum following the departure of the French forces and the Takuba Task Force.

The Malian Government is aware that the security of the Mission and its personnel is the responsibility of the host country and will do its utmost to assume that responsibility. In order to facilitate the transitional phase, we invite MINUSMA to complete its adaptation plan in collaboration with the Malian authorities.

A number of allegations have been made in this Chamber in relation to the security situation, and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to them. I imagine that some Council members were referring to the bilateral cooperation between Mali and the Russian Federation, which is aimed at strengthening the operational capabilities of the Malian Defence and Security Forces and has yielded results on the ground. I would like to thank the Russian Federation for responding to Mali's requests for support in that regard.

Although some speakers referred to the Wagner Group, I would like to make it very clear that Mali knows nothing about the Wagner Group. The Wagner Group is not a problem for us. Our problem is how to ensure the survival of our State, which, as I mentioned earlier, lost two thirds of its territory following the intervention of

which Council members are well aware. Our problem is how we provide for the safety and security of the Malian people, who are in dire straits, as not even their most fundamental rights are protected. Our concern is how we safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of our country in order to preserve it.

Of course, our response hinges on the diversification of our partners, specifically on the security front. In that regard, I would once again reiterate that Mali has the right to choose its own partners, and will do so in a sovereign and responsible manner, just as every other country in this Chamber has the right to do. We will continue to pursue that track in order to achieve the desired results on the ground.

In that connection, Mali remains open to all partners. As I mentioned, our problem is not the Wagner Group, but rather how to guarantee security for our country. Therefore, we are interested in all proposals that will assist us in meeting those needs. All partners wishing to contribute to that effort are welcome to do so. However, Mali will not tolerate any partner attempting to impose their own views on who Mali can or cannot cooperate with. That is not acceptable.

Once again, I would recall that the large-scale operations under way in Mali are being conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In that regard, I welcome the investments made by the United Nations and a number of countries that are represented here in this Chamber to build the capacity of the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

I also recall that, as part of those operations, Mali's respect for human rights is not to please its foreign partners but for its own benefit. Mali is an old country that has long been a part of civilization. We have a medieval Constitution dating back to the year 1325 — the Kouroukan Fouga — that affords particular importance to respect for human rights. We are first and foremost doing it for ourselves. We are also doing it to meet our international commitments. We are doing it because we are aware that we cannot succeed in Mali's current fight against terrorist groups by violating rights. We need to win the hearts and minds of the Malian people. Mali has absolutely no interest in taking that path, and we are aware that such a path could backfire. However, the Council should be aware that Mali is also a victim of a disinformation war, aimed precisely at punishing countries for their choices.

I think that we can continue. With regard to the renewal of the MINUSMA mandate, I would like to share Mali's position and its concerns, but also its expectations that the Security Council take them into account. First of all, I would like to make it clear that, for the Government of Mali, it is essential that the mandate be focused on the protection of the civilian population and support for the re-establishment of State authority throughout its national territory.

In that perspective, it is essential to better define and explain the concept of the protection of civilians in a context of asymmetric warfare, as was recalled earlier by the representative of India. It is necessary to clarify against whom we want to protect the population, considering the main threat comes from armed terrorist groups. In that context, how can MINUSMA protect the population if it is not able to deal with that threat?

In that particular context, as the Ambassador of India also recalled, MINUSMA's mandate must necessarily take into account the increasing strength of Mali's Defence and Security Forces, which are now in the front line against the terrorist groups, which are certainly suffering losses but are also inflicting enormous damage on the ground.

Similarly, in the context of the above-mentioned renewal of the MINUSMA mandate and the request for air support from Operation Barkhane, the Government of Mali expresses its strong opposition to the intervention of the French Barkhane force on its territory after the unilateral decision to withdraw that force, which was also followed by Mali's termination of the defence agreements with France. We therefore call for respect for our country's sovereignty and the decisions taken by the Malian authorities in that regard.

Secondly, the Government of Mali stresses the need for better coordination of MINUSMA's actions with the Malian State in order to ensure the full effectiveness of its future mandate. The Government of Mali also stresses the need for MINUSMA to work closely and effectively with the Malian authorities and stakeholders to help Mali to protect its civilian population and restore its authority throughout its territory.

On the allegations of restrictions imposed on MINUSMA, it should be noted that the Malian Government has not taken any restrictive measures particularly or specifically targeting the Mission. The introduction of temporary restrictions on part of the national airspace, which is a sovereign decision,

has a dual purpose. First, it is a matter of protecting Malian forces engaged in a new dynamic and offensive posture to regain the initiative and reduce the ability of terrorist groups to harm the Malian population. The success of that dynamic depends on the freedom of manoeuvre of the national forces. The Council will recognize that. The second goal is to address risks to air traffic associated with the intensive use of the third dimension by the Malian forces, in particular with flights by military aircraft, including unmanned aircraft, and frequent artillery fire. Indeed, the security and safety of the users of Malian airspace is a sovereign responsibility of the State. It is therefore necessary that coordination measures be put in place to prevent any unfortunate incident. It should be noted that all flights requested by MINUSMA are authorized as long as coordination is carried out and risks to air traffic are managed and that it does not interfere negatively with ongoing military operations.

With regard to the question of the return to constitutional order in Mali mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report and by several members of the Security Council, I would like to recall the Malian people's commitment to democracy. Decree No. 2022-0335/PT-RM of 6 June 2022 sets the duration of the transition at 24 months, starting on 26 March 2022 and ending on 26 March 2024. Similarly, Decree No. 2022-0342/PT-RM of 10 June 2022 established, under the President of the Transition, a commission to draw up a preliminary draft constitution for the Republic of Mali, in the context of rebuilding. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General spoke at length on that development. That shows the commitment of the national authorities to the return to constitutional order. I think that that is the message that we would like to convey to the international community through the decree. We want everyone to be able to work with us within that time frame to get out of the current situation and have an elected President by 26 March 2024 at the latest so that the country can regain its place in the community of nations.

In the next few days, a new electoral law will be adopted by the National Transitional Council. That law also covers the single body in charge of managing the elections. I would recall that the recent events that took place in Mali in 2020 were mainly following election disputes. That electoral law will therefore be before the Transitional Council in the next few days and will be adopted. The Government will immediately proceed

with publishing the timeline of the transition to further meet the expectations of ECOWAS and the other partners by the beginning of July, we hope.

Similarly, as part of the continuing dialogue with ECOWAS — a dialogue that has never been broken off, I recall, but is strengthening and which even has a positive momentum — a follow-up mechanism will be set up in consultation with the local transition follow-up committee, which, moreover, includes the United Nations, whose contribution in the context of that committee I welcome, and the African Union. Accordingly, the Government of Mali hopes that the embargo, which unjustly affects the Malian people and the economy of Mali, as well as that of the region, will be lifted very soon. In that regard, my Government expresses its deep gratitude to all the leading figures who are working tirelessly to achieve that result, particularly the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, and the ECOWAS Mediator, His Excellency Mr. Goodluck Jonathan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Secretary-General and several members of the Security Council have expressed their concern about the human rights situation in Mali — a significant concern. I would like to stress that the Government remains committed to respecting, and ensuring respect for, human rights, with regard to both our own forces and international forces present on our territory.

I would also like to reiterate that there is no deliberate desire on the part of the Malian authorities to grant impunity in cases of proven human rights violations. Malian justice is therefore systematically referred to whenever cases of human rights violations are reported, including when such allegations are made against the Malian Defence and Security Forces. I must say that last year, the military courts sentenced many members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces, who are answering for their deeds. That shows the commitment of the Government of Mali, despite the many challenges, to making every effort to combat impunity.

However, the Government of Mali would like to draw the Council's attention to the risks of the politicization and exploitation of human rights for the purposes of hidden agendas and to the multiplicity and multiplication of human rights mechanisms and their increasing burden on the functioning of the Malian Administration, whose officials must respond to their

numerous, simultaneous and often uncoordinated requests at a time when that same Administration is called on to serve the urgent needs of our population. I hope that the Council takes that into account.

The Government of Mali wishes to recall that the improvement of the human rights situation is closely linked to progress in the security sector, as well as the return of State representatives and basic social services for the benefit of the population we serve. Indeed, it is to achieve those major objectives that Mali has called on the support of the international community, which is there to help us rather than to create problems for us.

To conclude this chapter on human rights, I would like to remind the Council that the Government of Mali has rejected allegations of human rights violations and abuses attributed to the Malian Defence and Security Forces in the latest MINUSMA quarterly report. Indeed, after careful investigation, we have come to the conclusion that those allegations are biased, uncorroborated, based on uncontested testimony and not supported by any tangible evidence. I would like to take this opportunity to categorically reject the false impression conveyed by this quarterly MINUSMA report that Malian forces are using violence to target individuals from certain ethnic communities. Mali is an age-old multi-ethnic country with a multi-ethnic army. Mali is therefore incapable of targeting particular ethnic communities.

Clearly, those allegations are intended to tarnish the image of the Malian armed forces and to discredit them in the eyes of the population and the international community. Nevertheless, the Government of Mali remains open to constructive dialogue with human rights organizations, including the Malian National Human Rights Commission, in order to combat impunity.

On the regional dimension, as many members made reference to, I heard several Council members express regret at Mali's withdrawal from the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), including the Joint Force. I would like to remind them that this is a sovereign decision taken by Mali in response to violations of the organization's founding treaties, double standards and hostile external interference from a founding member State. Mali's

withdrawal was formally notified to the G-5 Sahel bodies. I invite the Security Council to take note of that decision, including with regard to the implementation of MINUSMA's mandate. As a result, the G-5 Sahel can no longer intervene on Malian territory.

However, the Government of the Republic of Mali remains faithful to its commitment to regional integration and cooperation for the achievement of objectives that serve the interests of our peoples. In that regard, Mali will continue its bilateral cooperation with the countries concerned, as well as its regional security partnership within the framework of appropriate mechanisms, in a spirit of good neighbourliness, brotherhood, solidarity and friendship with those countries and their peoples.

The Government remains aware that the lasting resolution of the Malian crisis continues to be the primary responsibility of the Malian people. Mali therefore remains determined to play its full part to restore peace and security throughout its national territory through the use of political and security levers, socioeconomic development, justice and reconciliation. However, the realization of those ambitious projects requires a clear, pragmatic, realistic and holistic reading of the situation, as well as the understanding and support of the Council and all of Mali's partners in order to move forward.

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

In conclusion, I pay tribute to the memory of all victims of this crisis — military, foreign and Malian, including the Blue Helmets who fell in recent days — who have given their lives in defence of Mali's honour.

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

I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*