



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9086th meeting

Thursday, 7 July 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Costa Filho	(Brazil)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. Benaabou
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2022/521)

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22-41617 (E)



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

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Security Council, to His Excellency Mr. Ferit Hoxha, Permanent Representative of Albania, for his service as President of the Council for the month of June. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Hoxha and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2022/521)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Khatir Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; Her Excellency Ms. Rabab Fatima, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, in her capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and Ms. Rabia Djibo Magagi, Coordinator of the Association Alliance for Peace and Security.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/521, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to be here today to present the latest report (S/2022/521) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

I would first like to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July.

The subregion of West Africa and Sahel continues to evolve at different rhythms: on the one hand, there are citizens who freely exercise their right to choose their leaders and, on the other, there are military who increasingly seek to dominate the political space. National dialogues are under way in many countries to consolidate democratic governance, at a time when, in large parts of the Sahel, men and women are fleeing their land because of insecurity and to ensure the education of their children. My message today is hopeful, but it also reflects the concerns and the urgency of the moment.

At the beginning of April in Dakar, along with the Governments of Ireland and Ghana and in cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNOWAS organized a regional conference on the various effects of climate change on peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, a conference that brought together representatives of several Governments, regional organizations, experts and technical and financial partners.

On that occasion, representatives of rural communities shared daily experiences about the devastation caused to agriculture by the increasing irregularity of the rains, affecting transhumance routes and triggering conflicts over dwindling resources. As in other parts of the globe, climate change amplifies and exacerbates the existing conflicts, in an environment already vulnerable to other shocks.

It is no longer a secret to anyone that, in many parts of the Sahel in particular, extremist and criminal groups exploit such weaknesses, exacerbated by State structures that are often inadequate. Their promises to be providers of protection and social justice often find fertile ground among vulnerable populations.

Today the southward spread of extremist violence has grown from isolated incidents to a genuine threat in coastal countries, leading countries such as Togo to declare a state of emergency in the north of its territory.

There is no magic formula for effectively combating insecurity. That necessarily requires democratic and accountable governance, including the establishment of decentralized Administrations that deliver solutions to the daily lives of the population, while respecting a social contract of participation and mutual obligations between the Government and the citizens.

In fact, several West African countries are successfully strengthening the foundations of democratic governance. In the recent local and legislative elections in Senegal and the Gambia, citizens maturely took the opportunity in what they considered to be fair processes to hold their representatives in power to account.

In exemplary polls, organized by electoral management bodies trusted by the citizens, Gambian voters sent a message to strengthen the opposition in Parliament after unambiguously giving President Adama Barrow a second term four months earlier. In many cities and towns in Senegal, in the first direct local elections, young candidates were easily elected as mayors, in some cases even replacing the candidates of the ruling coalition.

In addition, dialogue processes are under way in several countries, thereby building political consensuses, which provide opportunities to strengthen social cohesion. In Nigeria, where the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari is completing his second and final term in office, the various stages of the electoral process for the 2023 polls are proceeding in accordance with the timetable set and agreed by all national stakeholders.

I am also very encouraged by the contents of the Gambian Government's white paper, which endorsed almost all the recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. If the trend continues, as we are mindful of the stagnation of similar processes elsewhere in the region, that will go a long way towards national harmony, thereby allowing the Gambia to focus effectively on development challenges.

UNOWAS, as well as the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the subregion, continue to support those important processes. I have just returned from Nigeria, where I particularly had discussions with the leaders of the two main coalitions in the presidential election race, as well as the officials of the Electoral Commission. In Sierra Leone, in close consultation with ECOWAS, our joint involvement has helped to reduce political tensions ahead of the June 2023 presidential election.

I have personally maintained contact with the leaders of the military transitions, particularly in Burkina Faso and Guinea, based on the clear principle of a return to constitutional order within the most acceptable time frame possible and in the context of

specific actions to be undertaken to achieve that in the best possible conditions for the people. In Burkina Faso, our ongoing dialogue has contributed greatly to maintaining bridges between the authorities in Ouagadougou and ECOWAS.

In that regard, we should welcome the agreement reached between the transitional Government of Burkina Faso and President Mahamadou Issoufou, ECOWAS Mediator, which was endorsed by the ECOWAS summit on 3 July, setting the transition period at 24 months from 1 July 2022.

I am also pleased that the transitional authorities in Guinea, with whom I met last week during a visit to Conakry, have reaffirmed their willingness to maintain the talks with ECOWAS and to hold an inclusive dialogue. I hope that the ECOWAS appointment of a new mediator for Guinea will allow a consensus to be reached that is acceptable to all stakeholders.

At the subregional level, we are assisting partners to adapt mechanisms and normative frameworks to the current requirements. In that regard, I am pleased to report on the progress made in establishing a regional platform of Ministers of Justice of ECOWAS members, which is in the process of being formally adopted by the ECOWAS Heads of State.

Similarly, through those various channels of engagement, UNOWAS continues to encourage the ongoing process of revising the 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, initiated by the Heads of State of the Community.

Such initiatives, among others, provide encouragement to address the relevant governance concerns. According to recent reports, press freedom has declined significantly in many countries, while there are increasing concerns about a shrinking civic and political space. The allegations of human rights violations and the manipulation of the judicial system have an undermining effect on trust in institutions and the credibility of electoral processes.

Despite their stated priorities, the military authorities seem to be reluctant to reverse the deteriorating security situation. Recent statistics reveal that the number of civilian casualties from extremist violence in the central Sahel at the end of May already exceeded the number of deaths in the whole of last year. Civilians are caught in the crossfire of armed groups

fighting for supremacy in their respective areas, as well as in the counter-terrorism actions of national defence and security forces.

The reports that we are all receiving of massacres of innocent and unarmed civilians, including women and children, reflect the tragedy that is currently unfolding in that part of the world.

As we know, the impact on the humanitarian situation is very marked. Recent expert reports indicate that West Africa is facing an unprecedented nutrition crisis. In the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries, 12.7 million people are food insecure, that is, 45 per cent more than at the same time last year. Last year's lack of rainfall reduced food production by an average of 11 per cent in the Sahel. Exacerbated by the international geopolitical context, food prices have risen by between 40 and 60 per cent, putting them out of reach for many poor and displaced households.

At the same time, the announced withdrawal of the G-5 Sahel from Mali and the ongoing military redeployments are jeopardizing the security arrangements in the subregion. Meanwhile, some countries, such as the Niger and Burkina Faso, are redefining their respective counter-terrorism strategies, setting up dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms at the national and local levels.

At the regional level, together with ECOWAS and other partners, I continue to advocate for the Accra Initiative to forestall and prevent the much-feared spread of instability to coastal countries. We are currently finalizing discussions on helping to set up the secretariat of that regional framework and to contribute to capacity-building through the United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism.

Furthermore, I continue to seek the commitment of international partners to fund the implementation of the 2020-2024 ECOWAS action plan for the eradication of terrorism.

UNOWAS will continue to use all its resources to promote cross-cutting and holistic solutions, of which the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is a key vehicle. Under the active leadership of my colleague Mar Dieye, Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, the Strategy now has a project bank that includes 15 projects from the United Nations country teams of Mali, the Niger, Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritania and Guinea. The process has benefited from the contributions

of more than 10 separate agencies involved in the Sahel, thereby materializing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This concept of co-creation has the dual advantage of strengthening the coherence of projects and operationalizing joint programme modalities that reflect the spirit of delivering as One United Nations.

We are now preparing to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the creation of UNOWAS in a few weeks, which coincides with that of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, set up in 2002 to implement the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the border dispute between those two great neighbouring and brotherly countries.

In that regard, allow me to underscore the colossal work accomplished by the Mixed Commission. As part of that process, Nigeria and Cameroon have completed the transfer of sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula and have finalized agreements for the demarcation of the entire length of their maritime borders and over 2,050 kilometres of their 2,100-kilometre land border, leaving only 50 kilometres under dispute. The Security Council would do well to solemnly congratulate Nigeria and Cameroon for their commitment, which led to this success. The Mixed Commission will forever remain a concrete model of effective United Nations support for peaceful conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

This Council meeting is being held in the wake of the 3 July ECOWAS summit, which reached agreements to end the crisis with the transitional regimes in Mali and Burkina Faso and the relaunching of a promising dialogue with the transitional authorities in Guinea. At this point, I want to express the wish that we seize these opportunities together, building on the efforts made by the peoples and the leaders of West Africa and the Sahel, working with them to make a significant impact that lays the foundations for change towards sustainable development.

However, I deplore the fact that women, who make up more than half of the West African population, continue to be grossly underrepresented in governance structures and decision-making processes. I regret that some national Parliaments have even rejected bills aimed at ensuring a more equitable representation of women. More than 20 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), that is not only an injustice to women, but a threat to our common future.

I therefore call on national and international actors to redouble their efforts to ensure that similar

laws under deliberation in the Parliaments of the subregion are adopted as a matter of priority, and I urge Governments, citizens and partners to unite in making national and regional action plans a budgetary and strategic priority.

On behalf of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, I would like to thank the Council for its continued support and guidance. In accordance with our mandate and by constantly putting our good offices and other specific comparative advantages at the service of the subregion, we will continue to work together with our regional and international partners for the consolidation of peace, security and democracy in West Africa and the Sahel.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Fatima.

Ms. Fatima: I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and your excellent stewardship. I also thank you for inviting me to share the perspective of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel.

At the outset, I wish to express the Commission's full support for the good offices of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif in West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Drawing on the Commission's country-specific and regional engagements, I wish to bring the following issues to the attention of the Security Council.

The Commission has consistently recognized the region's potential to yield peace and inclusive development for its nations and peoples and has advocated for intensifying efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure shared prosperity and lasting peace in the region.

The Commission is concerned about the recent military takeovers in the region and echoes the calls made by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for a return to constitutional order. The Commission underscores the importance of strengthening democratic institutions in the countries under transition and remains ready to help mobilize international support for their national peacebuilding priorities. In Burkina Faso, for example, the transitional authorities have requested the

Commission to convene a meeting in order to discuss areas in need of support in the country.

The Commission is gravely concerned about the persistence of violent incidents perpetrated by non-State armed groups and terrorist groups affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida, such as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, the Islamic State West Africa Province and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam waal-Muslimin. The expansion of those terrorist groups to the coastal countries, notably in the Gulf of Guinea, and their growing nexus with organized criminal networks and pirates in order to facilitate the trafficking of drugs, arms and ammunition is another worrisome trend.

The Commission notes that the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea is precarious and that maritime insecurity in the Sahel remains a significant concern for the coastal countries. The Commission takes note of the adoption of the resolution 2634 (2022) and reiterates its support for the efforts that aim to strengthen the regional maritime security architecture.

The Commission underscores the importance of political unity between and among the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries in order to consolidate the gains achieved through its cooperative efforts. It is important to continue investing in efforts to address the root causes that aggravate the conflicts, instability and violence in the region. The Commission welcomes UNOWAS efforts to reinvigorate the Ministerial Coordination Platform of the Sahel Strategy as part of the responses to this challenging context. The Commission also welcomes the planned joint AU-United Nations-ECOWAS-G-5 Sahel strategic assessment on the security and governance situation and response initiatives in the region, and it encourages timely follow-up and support. The Commission encourages greater support for the objectives of the G-5 Sahel priority investment plan, which incorporates climate-change adaptation and governance reforms. In that regard, the PBC underscores the pre-eminent role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to comprehensively address the issue of climate change.

The Commission is concerned about the unprecedented levels of insecurity in the Sahel arising from the growth in terrorism and the consequent displacement and humanitarian needs, threatening social cohesion, all exacerbated by the socioeconomic

effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic. It urges sustained and coordinated support by the United Nations system for building and sustaining peace, including through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and improved cooperation among the United Nations country teams in the region, as well as between the country teams and UNOWAS.

Particular attention is needed to combat terrorism and the prevalent violent extremism that is conducive to terrorism. The Commission also notes the Secretary-General's calls for predictable and sustained financing for the counter-terrorism operations in the region and acknowledges the need to address the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, natural disasters, drought, desertification, land degradation, energy access and food insecurity. It calls for strengthening conflict prevention and management mechanisms, as well as food-security intervention in the region.

In the Lake Chad basin region, the Commission stresses the need to increase support for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region, with a focus on the critical role of the territorial action plans. It welcomes the expansion of the Lake Chad Basin Commission's (LCBC) support base to include humanitarian, development and peace actors. In implementing the Regional Strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission encourages sustained partnership between the LCBC, including its Governors' Forum, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations.

Allow me to draw from the Commission's country-specific engagements. In the Gambia, the Commission welcomes the holding of peaceful parliamentary elections. However, it notes that more needs to be done to ensure the equitable representation of women in Parliament and other decision-making spaces. The Commission also notes the Government's release of its white paper on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission and reiterates its commitment to supporting their timely and effective implementation.

In Guinea-Bissau, the Commission stresses the importance of inclusive dialogue for urgently needed reforms, as stated in the 2016 Conakry Agreement and

the 2019 Stability Pact. The Commission encourages continuing support from the international community for the country's peacebuilding priorities, which among other things include expanding socioeconomic opportunities, implementing fiscal policy and accountability reforms, advancing the women and peace and security agenda and strengthening national institutions, including those at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. The Commission also welcomes the appointment of the President of Guinea-Bissau as Chairman of ECOWAS.

In Liberia, the Commission has been supporting the country's peacebuilding efforts, including its investments in social cohesion, national reconciliation, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, youth empowerment and cross-border cooperation for peace and development. The Commission will also support efforts to ensure that the presidential and legislative elections scheduled to be held in 2023 are inclusive, peaceful, transparent, free and fair.

In Sierra Leone, the Commission welcomes efforts to foster an inclusive dialogue in the run-up to the June 2023 general elections. It fully supports the ongoing efforts to increase women's participation, including by establishing quotas for women, and encourages continued action to consolidate the democratic space, pursue policy and institutional reforms and strengthen national and local institutional capacity.

In line with its gender strategy and action plan, the Commission fully supports efforts to strengthen regional frameworks in support of women, peace and security and encourages UNOWAS to bring them to the attention of the Commission, in collaboration with ECOWAS and the G-5 Sahel. The Commission further encourages the adoption and implementation of national action plans on youth, peace and security across the region in line with resolution 2250 (2015), and expresses its readiness to support such efforts. It also highlights the importance of greater investment in the region to increase employment opportunities for young people.

Finally, the Commission recognizes the critical support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to countries in the region. With an active portfolio of more than \$177 million, the Fund supports cross-border cooperation with an emphasis on reducing farmer-herder conflicts and preventing the spread of terrorist

threats. Through its regular portfolio and annual dedicated Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, the PBF supports national initiatives focusing on women and young people's participation in decision-making processes, as well as ensuring that women and young people's voices are heard on all peacebuilding issues. The PBF also supports targeted socioeconomic initiatives linked to responses to community grievances and peace dividends. The Commission therefore invites partners to explore how PBF support for addressing the root causes of crises in the region could be scaled up, including through strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and regional and international financial institutions.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Magagi.

Ms. Magagi (*spoke in French*): Let me thank Brazil for this invitation to the Citizens' Coalition for the Sahel.

In January, it was my Burkinabé sister, Cécile Yougbaré of Médecins du Monde, who was here to bring our call for a radical change of strategy in the Sahel in order to better take into account the needs of the populations (see S/PV.8944). Now, six months later, the situation has greatly deteriorated for women, children and all civilians in my country, the Niger, as well as in Burkina Faso and Mali — the three countries in the central Sahel that are most affected by the conflict.

Today we heard a bleak picture from His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif and the other briefer. Let me add some data from the progress report of the People's Coalition for the Sahel that we just published last month in Dakar.

In our three countries, eight civilians are killed every day, on average, due to terrorism-related violence. In Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger, there is a lot of talk about the rise in power of our armies. However, we are also helplessly witnessing the exponential rise in the massacre of civilian populations. Over the past year, the number of civilians killed by armed extremist groups doubled. On a positive note, the number of abuses attributed to defence and security forces has fallen by 11 per cent, although it is still too high.

In any case, every massacre leads to more people on the road. Those people will no longer have access to their land for farming, which is their main activity. We will soon be in the lean season between two harvests,

and 10 million people are reported to be food insecure in the Sahel — 60 per cent more than last year.

Many people of goodwill are mobilizing to help us, including the members of the Security Council, which we thank for their efforts. However, we must admit that it is not enough. We will therefore have to start doing things differently. Otherwise, we will face multidimensional problems.

We have been saying this for years, but no one has wanted to listen to us. That is why we created the People's Coalition for the Sahel, which brings together more than 50 civil society organizations from the region so that our voice is heard more loudly and where it is needed. My presence here today is proof that we are finally beginning to be heard. What does it mean to do things differently? It means putting the protection of the population at the heart of any response to the security crisis in these three countries.

Some time ago, we saw our President announce that he had bought helicopters from Türkiye to fight terrorists and secure the country. That is, of course, reassuring from a military point of view. However, as a history and geography teacher in Niamey, I am saddened every day to see my students attending classes without a desk and chair. For most of our classes, pupils have to sit on canvas bags. To do things differently is therefore to ask what we most urgently invest in — in a mainly military response, the limits of which are now clearly visible, in the education of our children, who no longer go to school because of the conflict, or in our health facilities, which are either closed or increasingly empty due to a lack of medicines or health workers?

Our motto at the Association Alliance for Peace and Security is "Without young people, there can be no lasting peace. Without women, there can be no real peace."

I congratulate Brazil for its commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, because women are among the first victims of conflict. But in truth, they are not only victims, but they are also part of the solution if they participate and have access to decision-making processes. At the moment, they are barely involved, if at all.

Take the example of my country, the Niger, in which there are eight regions with eight governors — all men. One of the measures of the state of emergency is the curfew decreed in four of its regions. That means that a

pregnant woman who goes into labour during the curfew can access a health centre only with great difficulty. I think that a female governor would be more sensitive about that issue. In addition, the parliamentarians who voted for the state of emergency are renewing it without a real evaluation of its impact on civilians, in general, and on women in particular.

At the Association Alliance for Peace and Security, we strengthen the capacities of female teachers, preachers and traditional leaders on issues of social cohesion and the prevention and fight against violent extremism. We are convinced that it is through dialogue and mediation that we will succeed in bringing peace to our countries — not through arms or sanctions that weaken already suffering populations. I am delighted that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) lifted the sanctions that were hitting the brotherly and sisterly populations of Mali hard — a decision worthy of what we call the “ECOWAS of the people”.

In the Sahel, we truly feel left to our own devices. We therefore need the members of the Security Council to convince our leaders and Governments that all their energy must be spent on better protecting the people. That means that we must stop talking about eradicating terrorists. Instead, we need to eradicate the reasons that drive our young people to take up arms and kill their brothers and sisters. To achieve that, we need to improve governance and access to basic social services. We must continue our fight against stigmatization and impunity, particularly that enjoyed by certain members of own defence and security forces, because that only perpetuates the vicious circle of violence.

Our report *Sahel: What Has Changed* contains specific recommendations for implementing this new response, which places the people at the heart of all decisions. It is a toolkit for the Security Council and for our Governments. We count on the Council to make good use of it and, above all, to implement it.

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

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

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): Before I start, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your team on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you every success. I would also like to express my gratitude to Albania for its excellent stewardship

of the Council’s business for the month of June. Let me start today by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and our dear friend and colleague Ambassador Rabab Fatima, for her statement on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission, whose work Ireland strongly supports. I have looked forward to hearing from Ms. Djibo Magagi.

The security situation in the region has deteriorated rapidly since January. Ireland strongly condemns the deadly attacks carried out against civilians and peacekeepers. We offer our sincere condolences to the families of the peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali who were killed in further heinous attacks this week.

The threat of violence and insecurity, which was already catastrophic in Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger, continues to intensify and has expanded southward into the coastal States. That expansion should not come as a surprise to any of us. We have been warned about it time and time again.

Regional leadership and cooperation are crucial to facing those threats. We welcome the intensified collaboration under the Accra Initiative. However, we remain concerned that cooperation within the Group of Five for the Sahel has weakened at a time when the security situation is deteriorating. The increased terrorist threat has led to an intensification in counter-terrorism responses. We call on all national authorities to ensure that international law is always obeyed in counter-terrorism activities.

Reports of human rights violations allegedly perpetrated by security forces, in some cases accompanied by foreign mercenaries, are deeply troubling. Failure to ensure accountability serves only to further drive radicalization. To prevent the further spread of terrorism, greater focus must be placed on addressing the underlying drivers of radicalization. We know that a military solution alone will not suffice when the drivers of violence remain unaddressed.

We share the Secretary-General’s concern about the impact of unconstitutional changes of Government on the stability of the subregion, as well as on political, economic and social progress.

The role of the Economic Community of West African States is key. We welcome the outcome of the recent summit and its efforts to support political

transitions in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea. We also commend its work on the review of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. Those transition processes must be genuinely inclusive. They should result in free, fair, transparent and credible elections and a return to constitutional order.

Ireland deeply regrets the growing restrictions of civil liberties, as well as the continued under-representation of women in decision-making processes across the region.

We are also extremely concerned about the increasingly dire humanitarian situation. Climate shocks have contributed to the dramatic food crisis, and we remain concerned about the adverse implications of climate change for peace and security in the region. In that regard, Ireland was delighted to co-organize April's regional conference on climate change and peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, to which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General referred earlier.

We welcome the adoption of a call to action, through which the countries of the region clearly recognized the challenges presented by climate-related security risks. We hear their call for more inclusive and evidence-based analysis and policymaking, integrated partnerships and scaled-up conflict-sensitive climate finance. The United Nations system, including the Security Council, has a critical role to play in enabling those actions.

West Africa and the Sahel are at a crossroads. The challenges faced by the region are complex and far-reaching, but they are not insurmountable. Achieving political stability through inclusive democratic governance, addressing the drivers of violence and alleviating the humanitarian crisis will help us to ensure that the hard-won gains of recent years will not be eroded.

In that context, we hope that the Council will unite in support for the continued work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and unanimously agree on a presidential statement — which we will propose alongside our Ghanaian colleagues — to guide its vital work over the next six months.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Brazilian delegation on your assumption of the Security Council presidency

for this month and to assure you of our cooperation. I would also like to thank the Albanian delegation for its successful leadership of the Council during the past month.

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

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/521) and thank Special Representative Annadif for his briefing and insightful perspectives on the situation in the region, as well as his continued personal engagement in resolving the challenges in the region. We also welcome the participation in this meeting of Ambassador Rabab Fatima of Bangladesh, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as well as Ms. Rabia Djibo Magagi, Coordinator of the Association Alliance for Peace and Security, and their additional perspectives.

The participation of the PBC in this meeting and the recommendations of the Commission on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) underscore the importance of the whole of the United Nations system addressing the multidimensional challenges of West Africa and the Sahel in an integrated and coherent manner. The coordination of the Council with PBC will allow for broader engagement with the political, governance, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian situations and the provision of practical support to the implementation of regional strategies and investment programmes.

On the political situation, we welcome the efforts to consolidate democracy in the region, including in the Gambia, Senegal and Benin, and the reforms being undertaken in Cabo Verde to improve governance and sustain social cohesion, as well as the political dialogue initiated in Côte d'Ivoire to address political grievances. Despite the progress being made, we continue to be concerned about the rollback of democracy in countries such as Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

We underscore the urgent need to restore constitutional order in the region and welcome the decisions taken by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at its sixty-first ordinary session, held in Accra on 3 July. In that regard, we welcome the progress made in the ongoing review of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the operationalization of its

Conflict Prevention Framework. We believe that those measures are critical in consolidating democracy in the region.

We take note of the 24-month electoral timetable submitted to ECOWAS by the Burkina Faso authorities, as well as the scheduling of presidential elections in Mali by March 2024. We urge the transitional authorities concerned to spare no effort in robustly implementing the electoral timetable to ensure a definite return to constitutional rule. We welcome the lifting of the economic and financial sanctions imposed on Mali and Burkina Faso based on the current progress made towards transition, and we note the continuing suspension of their participation in the decision-making processes of ECOWAS.

Concerning the security situation, we note with concern the deteriorating security environment in parts of the region, which is reflected by the heightened incidence of terrorist attacks and the aggravation of intercommunal and herder-farmer conflicts, as well as the expansion of terrorist activities into the neighbouring littoral countries of the Sahel, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo.

The A3 condemns in the strongest terms the persistent attacks against civilian populations, United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. We particularly deplore the use of explosive devices and attacks on schools and hospitals by armed groups, as well as terrorist groups.

We remain anxious over the spillover effect of the protracted crisis in Libya on the Sahel, the possible return of foreign terrorist fighters and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We therefore urge coordinated action among the countries of the region, including in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, in addressing the matter.

We reiterate our support for regional initiatives, since that remains one of the sustainable ways of dealing with the security situation in the region. 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 the Council must have a coherent position. We encourage funding and logistical support for regional arrangements, such as the Accra Initiative, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad basin.

While we welcome the decline in kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea, with no kidnappings of crews reported in the first quarter of 2022, as compared to about 40 during the same period in 2021, we remain concerned about the growing link between the terrorists on land and the pirates at sea. In that connection, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report following the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022), on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, and we believe that it will provide a good basis to understand the nature of the problem and the best approach to resolving it.

In view of the interlocking and transregional nature of the challenges, we encourage the harmonization of the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and UNOWAS to improve coordination in tackling issues such as maritime security and the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

The A3 is alarmed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation, as evidenced by the more than 6.2 million displaced persons across the Sahel, due to the heightened insecurity. The situation is further compounded by other factors, including the coronavirus disease pandemic, climate change and food insecurity. The seriousness of the climate menace, which has manifested itself in floods and droughts, requires urgent attention. In that regard, we welcome the outcome document of the regional conference on climate and security held in Dakar this year, and we share its call to action. Furthermore, funds to support the increasing humanitarian needs remain a challenge. We therefore reiterate the Secretary-General's call for funding support from donor partners to help to meet the target of the more than \$2.9 billion required for the implementation of the humanitarian response plan in the region.

The A3 also condemns the persistent abuses perpetrated against women, girls and children, including sexual exploitation, and attacks against schools by armed groups, which led to the closure of more than 6,800 schools in the region. Such acts are in flagrant violation of international human rights law, continue to have a psychosocial impact on children and diminish future contributions to the economic growth and development of the affected societies.

Before concluding, we would like to reiterate the need to further invest in addressing the root causes of the insecurity in the region by focusing on the governance and development deficits. In that context, we encourage

support for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as well as the priority investment plan of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and we laud the PBC's interventions in the region, including initiatives targeting young people, women and agricultural self-employment. We encourage further measures to empower women and young people to enhance their full and meaningful participation in all political processes, including elections and transitions.

The Commission's involvement in climate-related peace and development interventions, as well as in the promotion of community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, is also critical.

The A3 believes that a comprehensive approach, characterized by deeper cooperation at the national, regional and multilateral levels, is indispensable to addressing the complex challenges in the region. In that regard, we underscore the importance of the ongoing African Union-United Nations-ECOWAS-G-5 Sahel joint strategic assessment on governance and security in the Sahel, and we believe that the outcome of that assessment will provide a holistic and comprehensive approach in combating the challenges in the region.

Finally, following today's meeting, as indicated by the representative of Ireland, the co-penholders on UNOWAS intend to circulate an initial draft presidential statement on UNOWAS. We count on the support of all delegations for its consensual adoption, which, we believe, will underpin the efforts of UNOWAS in dealing with the challenges in the region.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): Let me thank Special Representative Annadif, Ambassador Fatima and Ms. Magigi for their helpful and insightful briefings.

As the number of coups and transition Governments have grown in West Africa, so has the importance of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS). The United States strongly welcomes the UNOWAS efforts to support the democratic process in the Sahel and advise those transitional Governments, especially in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. I therefore thank the Special Representative for that work.

Today I would like to talk about how we can make progress in those three countries, as well as in the broader regional security threats.

In Mali, the authorities must urgently restore constitutional rule by holding timely elections. Fortunately, the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) and Mali came to a welcome agreement on a 24-month transition timeline, starting from March 2022. We trust that the transition Government of Mali will turn its full attention to implementing the benchmarks for the remainder of that transition. That is what we expect; that is what the Malian people expect; and that is what the entire international community expects. We will all pay close attention to those benchmarks in the days to come. I must stress that the United States Government is very concerned about the alarming increase in credible allegations of human rights violations and abuses carried out by the Malian armed forces, in conjunction with the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group. Those potential abuses and violations are exactly why we warn countries against partnering with the Russia-backed Wagner Group.

Turning to Guinea, the transition Government must support the right of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest. It is long past time to return the country to constitutional, civilian-led democracy. In that regard, ECOWAS is an essential partner. We encourage its continued engagement and dialogue with all stakeholders.

Likewise, in Burkina Faso, ECOWAS plays a key role in support of transition processes and security. We are encouraged by the transition Government's proposal to ECOWAS for a two-year transition timeline to return Burkina Faso to democratically elected, civilian-led governance. We encourage partners to prioritize productive engagement with the transition Government and to take into account Burkina Faso's security and humanitarian challenges.

Finally, at the regional level, terrorist violence against civilian and military targets in the Sahel is tragically rampant. The ongoing conflict in neighbouring Libya increases instability by contributing to an increased flow of arms and mercenary groups in the region.

Working in that dangerous, complicated environment is not easy. We therefore applaud the UNOWAS efforts to address many of the region's challenges, from climate change to security to development in West Africa. We especially support work through its partnerships with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Environment Programme.

For our part, the United States continues to work with the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in

Iraq and Syria. The Coalition welcomed Burkina Faso as its eighty-fourth member in late 2021, and Benin in spring 2022 as the Coalition's eighty-fifth member. The Coalition also announced the formation of the Africa Focus Group in December 2021, which seeks to enhance African Coalition members' civilian-led counter-terrorism capabilities. All those efforts are critical. We can stamp out terrorism only by working together.

This is a moment of crisis for West Africa and the Sahel, but it can also be an opportunity to defeat terrorism, promote democracy and put the people of the region first. Let us all continue to work closely with UNOWAS to do just that.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): Let me first thank Albania for its presidency and wish Brazil all the best for its presidency during the month of July.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for his briefing and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) for its key role in preventive diplomacy. We further welcome the strong briefings by civil society representative Ms. Rabia Djibo Magagi and by Ambassador Fatima, the latter on the important links between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Security Council.

Let me also pay our deepest respect and condolences to the troops of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who once again this week fell victim to a mine, following a tragic month of unusually high casualties.

Norway welcomes the progress made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in negotiations with Mali and Burkina Faso on transition timetables and benchmarks resulting in the lifting of some economic and financial sanctions. We also welcome the release of President Kaboré. For the sake of both national and regional stability, the transition authorities in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea must now make good on their promises. In Mali, we also expect the authorities to respect the Security Council's new mandate for MINUSMA (resolution 2640 (2022)) and its status-of-forces agreement, including by allowing for mandated reporting and the timely rotations of troops.

We appreciate the ECOWAS review of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and urge reaching consensus on that important instrument. But while governance crises continue to hamper Governments in

fulfilling their responsibilities, humanitarian responses cannot wait. Throughout the region, food prices and the numbers of food-insecure people are rising by the day. Despite military takeovers in several countries, we see few signs of increased security for civilians. Rather what we see is insecurity that is spreading, especially from the central Sahel towards coastal States. In the past few months we have also seen terrorist attacks in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin. This worrisome trend clearly merits our collective vigilance, and together with the regrettable decision by Mali to withdraw from cooperation between the Group of Five for the Sahel further underlines the timeliness of the high-level panel on security and development in the Sahel. We count on former President Issoufou to steer it to swift, realistic and tangible recommendations.

In our view, the panel's security thinking should take a holistic approach, including on political dialogue. Discussions cannot shy away from financing or from mandates for robust, regionally led operations. They must also be founded on the due diligence and compliance frameworks for human rights of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. That joint security responses are indeed possible has been demonstrated with regard to the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. We welcome the positive trends in that area, thanks to the strong leadership of Nigeria, Ghana and other coastal countries, which have been matched by stronger international support. Ahead of next year's 10-year mark for the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, resolution 2634 (2022) should serve as a strong call to action for a final push.

Lastly, as the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states,

“There is increasing evidence linking increased temperatures and drought to conflict, [and], though not the only cause, climate change undermines human livelihoods and security in Africa”.

A growing number of regionally focused reports show the particularly strong effects of climate change on security in West Africa and the Sahel. Norway therefore welcomes the work of UNOWAS on the issue, including by briefing the Peacebuilding Commission and supporting ECOWAS and States in developing strategies to address the adverse impacts. Such support, aimed at preventing problems jointly with other actors in the region, shows UNOWAS at its best.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif for briefing us on the latest developments in West Africa and the Sahel. I also thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, for her presentation, and the civil society briefer, for her insights.

The democratic traditions of West Africa and the Sahel have once again found resonance in the successful holding of parliamentary and local elections in the Gambia and Senegal. The people in West Africa have consistently anchored their faith in democracy. We also welcome the efforts of Governments in the region to launch electoral and administrative reforms to address long-standing grievances about political exclusion. Those developments augur well for the next electoral cycle in 2023. However, the consolidation of democracy has been overshadowed by successive coups in Mali, Guinea and, most recently, Burkina Faso. And democratic processes in the region risk being undermined by unabated violence perpetrated by terrorist and armed groups.

Amid that fragile political and security situation, we commend the leadership of the President of Ghana, as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We appreciate the efforts of ECOWAS in consolidating democracy and promoting good governance. We also commend ECOWAS for its continued engagement with the transitional authorities of Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea in pursuit of a transitional road map. The constructive deliberations and decisions adopted at the summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Accra, particularly with respect to Mali, are encouraging.

The violence in the region perpetrated by terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has reached unprecedented levels. We strongly condemn those attacks, including the attack on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali two days ago. They are indicative of some worrisome trends, including the exacerbation of internal displacement and the humanitarian crisis, the southward expansion of terrorism from the central Sahel region, evident from attacks in Benin and Togo, and the exploitation of security gaps by armed groups amid the ongoing reconfiguration of international security forces.

In that context, the countries in the region have shown tremendous grit and resilience in fighting terrorism individually and collectively through regional security initiatives. However, some of those mechanisms are handicapped by inadequate political cohesion and the lack of resources. We encourage the countries in West Africa and the Sahel to re-energize their security cooperation. We also reiterate our support for calls for sustainable and predictable support to the regional security initiatives, including through the United Nations assessed contributions.

The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel should remain focused on its mandate and work closely with national, regional and subregional stakeholders, particularly ECOWAS. The issue of climate change should be addressed holistically through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in accordance with its provisions and principles and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We reiterate that no artificial link should be drawn between climate change and security-related issues without a firm scientific basis. We are glad to note that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/521) has rightly prioritized the growing threat of terrorism over other issues. The humanitarian needs of vulnerable countries in the region also merit the attention of the international community.

In conclusion, India attaches great importance to its relations with countries in West Africa and the Sahel, and our commitment to development partnerships has remained steadfast. So far, India has provided soft loans of more than \$3.5 billion for projects in the region related to agriculture, irrigation, water supplies, energy and the solar and health sectors. Within the ambit of the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, we have also undertaken significant livelihood projects in nine partner countries in West Africa. Additionally, we have extended support through the capacity-building of civilians and defence forces, as well as through scholarships for higher education. India reiterates its commitment to the people of West Africa and the Sahel in their quest for peace and development.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Brazil on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for July and Albania on concluding its presidency for the previous month.

I thank Mr. Annadif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing and his tireless efforts in leading the important work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). We also thank Ambassador Rabab Fatima for her briefing and take this opportunity to express our appreciation for her efforts as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We wish her every success in her new role at the United Nations. We listened carefully to the briefing by Ms. Djibo Magagi.

I would also like to express the sincere condolences of the United Arab Emirates to the Arab Republic of Egypt and to the families of the Egyptian peacekeepers who fell victim to the recent terrorist attack in Mali, as well as all the victims of terrorist attacks in the region. The United Arab Emirates condemns in the strongest terms all attacks against civilians and peacekeepers.

I would like to highlight the encouraging improvements in the regional maritime security situation since our previous meeting on UNOWAS (see S/PV.8944), including the inauguration of the West Africa Regional Maritime Security Centre and increased cooperation among the countries of West Africa and the Sahel. In addition, the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2634 (2022), on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, sent a strong message about the international community's commitment to supporting the region's efforts in that regard.

The increase in cross-border threats posed by terrorist groups is one of the security challenges that requires the Council's special attention, especially given that those groups continue to expand their operations across the region. In that context, the international community must spare no effort to dismantle those terrorist networks and ensure that a comprehensive approach is adopted that focuses on addressing the root causes of extremism and terrorism and building community resilience.

It is also essential to ensure synergy among international and regional counter-terrorism frameworks, as well as regional ownership of those initiatives. In that regard, we note the importance of local initiatives, including the efforts of Burkina Faso and the Niger to incorporate local dialogue and reintegration initiatives into their counter-terrorism strategies.

With regard to political developments, the United Arab Emirates continues to emphasize the importance of national dialogue for addressing existing challenges

and establishing institutions that reflect the aspirations of the people of the countries concerned. In that context, we stress that it is essential for political processes to be inclusive and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in leadership and decision-making posts.

In addition, responding effectively to challenges with regional implications requires strengthening cooperation, solidarity and dialogue at the regional level. We stress the crucial role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in working with the countries in West Africa and the Sahel as they forge solutions to address the challenges they face. In that regard, we note the convening of the ECOWAS summit in Accra on 3 July, which issued decisions that responded to developments in the region.

We also express our deep concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which is compounded by climate shocks and increased conflicts across the region. We emphasize the importance of responding to those complex challenges. That includes the need for Council members to work together to address the interlinkages between climate change and security in West Africa and the Sahel. In that context, the United Arab Emirates commends UNOWAS for its efforts in conducting climate security assessments throughout the region and encourages further initiatives in that regard.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for UNOWAS and commend its continued cooperation with regional bodies, including ECOWAS and the African Union, which remains pivotal to addressing the challenges facing the region.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I join others in congratulating Brazil on its assumption of the Security Council presidency and wish to assure you, Sir, of my delegation's full support. We thank the Brazilian presidency and the other Council members for their kind words addressed to our delegation.

We welcome the briefings by Special Representative Annadif, Ambassador Fatima and Ms. Magagi.

At the outset, Albania strongly condemns the attacks yesterday against a convoy of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which killed two peacekeepers and injured many others. We express our condolences to the Government of Egypt and to the victims' families.

I would first like to recognize the role played by Special Representative Annadif and the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in supporting the countries of the Sahel.

Albania is concerned about the alarming humanitarian situation in the Sahel. The region's already dire levels of food insecurity, caused in part by climate shocks, have been further exacerbated by the impact of the war in Ukraine. We urge international partners to strengthen their response and support the 2022 humanitarian response plan, which is less than 20 per cent funded. We have to do more.

Albania remains concerned about the security situation. We condemn the recent terrorist attacks perpetrated in several States in the Sahel region. We encourage the authorities to intensify their collaboration under the Accra Initiative and strengthen cross-border cooperation to prevent terrorist attacks. In that regard, we stress that the Group of Five for the Sahel remains vital for regional stabilization, and we encourage members to step up their efforts. In that context, we consider that the implementation of the resolution on the Gulf of Guinea (resolution 2634 (2022)) is a good starting point and will help to further strengthen maritime security.

Albania welcomes the positive developments achieved since we last met in January (see S/PV.8944), including the peaceful elections held in the Gambia and Senegal. However, we continue to see the under-representation of women in decision-making positions. Governments must increase their efforts to address structural barriers in order to promote women's full, effective and meaningful participation in political processes.

Political stability in West Africa is under threat. In that context, focus must be placed on strengthening democratic governance, the rule of law and the justice system. The increase in human rights violations is deeply worrisome. We call on the Sahel States to investigate all allegations of abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated by non-State actors and defence or security forces. Independent and effective judiciary systems must ensure that impunity is finally addressed.

We would also welcome enhanced cooperation in the Sahel among United Nations country teams and between country teams and UNOWAS to address the challenges related to insecurity.

In conclusion, we welcome the decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lift the economic and financial sanctions on Mali and commend efforts to agree on acceptable timelines to return to constitutional order in Mali and Burkina Faso. In the same vein, we call on the Guinean authorities to cooperate with ECOWAS and present an acceptable transition timeline. Appropriate frameworks must be established by transitional Governments to encourage dialogue and consultations with political and civil society stakeholders to ensure a peaceful transition to constitutional order.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Brazilian delegation on your assumption of the Security Council presidency. I am confident that your presidency will be productive and successful. I would also like to thank the Albanian delegation for its presidency last month.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Khatir Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for the information he provided. We also thank the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ms. Rabab Fatima, and the civil society representative, Ms. Rabia Djibo Magagi.

We share the concerns that have been voiced today about the situation in many countries in West Africa, in particular in the Sahel. The region is facing increased terrorist threats and ongoing inter-ethnic and intercommunal conflicts, while organized crime and drug trafficking are flourishing. During the first half of 2022, more people died at the hands of militants than in the whole of 2021. We express our support to all of those who are leading the complex fight against terrorism in the region.

The humanitarian situation is also very difficult. The number of internally displaced persons has significantly increased, as has the number of people requiring food assistance. Many schools and medical establishments have closed. All of that requires that the States in the region, first and foremost in the Sahel, redouble their efforts to re-establish effective State control and socioeconomic governance as well as strengthen regional cooperation. We therefore wish every success to the countries of the region in carrying out the joint strategic assessment of the governance and security situation and in implementing the Accra Initiative.

We welcome the agreement between Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) reached on 3 July at the summit held in Accra. The lifting of sanctions from Bamako and the agreement on the deadlines for elections are positive events for the whole region. We hope that that will help to rebuild trust, normalize relations, re-establish economic and other relations and open the path to cooperation in the fight against increasing threats and challenges. That could be helped by significant progress in settling the disagreement regarding the issues involving Burkina Faso and Guinea.

At the same time, we must note that the withdrawal of the Barkhane counter-terrorist operation and the European Union and Takuba forces without Bamako's agreement, at least in the short term, is having a negative effect on the security situation.

Given those conditions, on the basis of a bilateral agreement Russia is providing the country with assistance in the fight against terrorism. We have already seen positive results. Here we reject any baseless insinuations that attempt to depict the help provided by Russia to Mali and other countries on the continent in a negative light. We have heard no complaints from the countries themselves.

We are deeply concerned at the fact that some countries, as we heard today in the statement made by the representative of the United States, speak so confidently on behalf of the population of the countries in the region, including Mali, saying that they know what the people want and what they expect and that that is the same as what Washington expects. That is very worrying, because evidently, the United States knew what ordinary people wanted in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. I think that the inhabitants of the Sahel or Libya could not have imagined the nightmare that people are suffering now as a direct result of the intervention in Libya in 2011.

We see that outside intervention continues to cause discord in the region, for example in the important structure of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, from which Mali has been virtually compelled to withdraw. But what is also not being taken into account is the commonly recognized fact that without the participation of that country, it will be impossible to defeat terrorism in the region. We are therefore convinced that the main role in maintaining peace and security in the Sahelo-Saharan region should fall to the Sahelians themselves.

We are in favour of the States of the region holding a truly independent line in resolving the corresponding issues on the basis of the principle of African solutions to African problems.

Coming back to the subject of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), we are convinced that the Office has a large-scale and difficult set of tasks in helping to resolve regional crises, participating in political mediation, providing assistance to strengthen State institutions and implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as well as carrying out coordinating functions for other United Nations structures on the ground.

The effectiveness of the Office's work will depend directly on how successfully it is able to work with other regional organizations, including the African Union, ECOWAS and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

We support the conclusions of the African Union Peace and Security Council meeting held on 1 June on the need to strengthen interaction and coordination between all of the structures working in the region in order to resolve the issues in the Sahel.

In conclusion, we would also like to remind colleagues that after the closure of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, in 2020, the responsibility for monitoring the situation in that country became part of the mandate of UNOWAS. We therefore believe that maintaining Security Council sanctions on Guinea-Bissau under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, which relates only to conditions involving threats to international peace and security, is absurd, and we call for these to be gradually lifted.

I should like to take this opportunity also to say to Mr. Annadif that Russia welcomes his commitment and efforts to help the countries of West Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin in overcoming their current difficulties.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): Like others, we wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and Albania for its excellent stewardship of the Council in June. We welcome the Special Representative to the Chamber and thank him for his very helpful update. We also welcome the presence of the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and thank Ms. Magagi for her briefing.

As we have heard, there have been some positive developments since we last met. The peaceful elections in the Gambia and Senegal are a welcome example of progress in West African democracy.

We remain very concerned by the political situation in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, although the recent progress made on election timelines in Mali and Burkina Faso is encouraging. Sustained progress towards the organization of credible elections and a return to constitutional order is now vital. The United Kingdom encourages the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to continue to focus on democratic processes across the region, in close coordination with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. We also welcome the focus that we have heard today on boosting women's participation in those processes.

It is also clear from today's briefing that the security situation in the region remains very fragile. The progress in the Gulf of Guinea is welcome, but the United Kingdom remains very concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Nigeria, the central Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin as well as by ongoing conflicts, including those involving extremist groups. The presence in the region of mercenary groups, including the Wagner Group, is a dangerous, destabilizing factor.

We encourage UNOWAS to focus on the practical steps that the United Nations can take, in a coordinated fashion, to address the root causes of conflict, including through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as the Special Representative said.

The United Kingdom, for its part, is committed to supporting that. We are working with Nigeria to respond through our Security and Defence Partnership, and we are supporting long-term stability in Mali and the wider Sahel, including through our contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and, like others, I should like to take this opportunity to offer our deep condolences in connection with the deadly attack on Egyptian peacekeepers last week.

I also want to focus today on the humanitarian situation, given the worrying developments we have heard. We are particularly concerned about the food security situation, especially where humanitarian

access is restricted and where the effects of the global food crisis and climate change compound the situation.

The United Kingdom is committed to improving the humanitarian situation, including through providing more than \$200 million of development assistance across the Sahel between 2019 and 2021.

The United Kingdom calls on all actors to continue cooperation with UNOWAS at the national and regional levels to facilitate humanitarian access. We hope that the Special Representative can use his good offices to work with all parties to conflict and the wider United Nations system to ensure safe and unimpeded access.

Finally, we are deeply concerned by the challenging human rights situation outlined in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/521). We urge UNOWAS to continue to work with States to ensure accountability and improved compliance with international human rights standards.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that Mexico has taken the floor, I would like, on behalf of my country, to warmly congratulate you, Sir, and wish you the very best of success in your presidency. I should also like to acknowledge the work undertaken by Albania last month.

In addition, we would like, in connection with the deaths of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) convoy peacekeepers who lost their lives, to extend our condolences to their families and to the Government of Egypt.

We should also like to express our gratitude to Special Representative Annadif and to the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ms. Rabab Fatima, who is here with us today, and to thank them for their briefings. We also welcome Ms. Magagi and thank her for her briefing.

Mexico welcomes the peaceful holding of elections in Senegal and the Gambia. We also take note of the consolidation of the regional institutional architecture through the implementation of the Accra Initiative to counter violent extremism and the inauguration of the West Africa Regional Maritime Safety Centre.

However, we are concerned by the fact that violence has increased in the region and is continuing to spread to the coastal States. The increasing number of civilian

victims in the attacks seen in Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria is quite simply alarming, as are the frequent attacks on MINUSMA. As we warned at our most recent meeting on the subject (see S/PV.8944), so long as weapons continue to circulate in the region without being monitored, it will be impossible for those trends to be reversed.

We welcome the recent agreement between the Ouagadougou authorities and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to set a timetable for the transition, and we also take note of the fact that the timetable to re-establish the constitutional order in Guinea is still pending.

Mexico supports the work undertaken by ECOWAS to move towards successful transitions in those countries and welcomes the agreement reached with Mali to hold elections in 2024 and to partially lift the regional sanctions.

In that context, I would like to refer to two issues that my country deems of critical importance.

First, it is a priority to resolve the governance problems that are affecting some countries in the region. International cooperation, including the significant work undertaken by the PBC, must focus on strengthening State institutions to ensure that they are able to shoulder their obligations to the population. We have seen time and again how the vacuum generated by the absence of the State is capitalized upon by extremists to impose their control through violence.

At the same time, Mexico is concerned to see an excessive military focus in strategies for State consolidation in countries that are assailed by violence. If military efforts do not go hand in hand with the provision of basic services such as health care and education, if there is no respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, then such efforts will be doomed to fail and will only contribute to the generalization of violence.

Secondly, Mexico believes that there must urgently be a regional mobilization to strengthen the resilience of Western Africa and the Sahel. Given the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the increase in the price of food and fuel and the consequences of climate change, the States of the region must make tremendous efforts to maximize the results of existing programmes such as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

West Africa and the Sahel, with the support of international financial institutions, must invest in their development and take measures that make it possible to capitalize on the demographic bonus to promote economic growth that benefits and has a positive impact on the population.

A sustainable development strategy in which women and young people actively participate is the best way of countering the worsening of the humanitarian situation, which has led to more than 6 million people being displaced and rendered more than 13 million food-insecure.

Mr. Benaabou (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and Ms. Rabia Djibo Magagi for their statements.

I would like to make two points.

First, on the political situation in West Africa and the Sahel, France restates its support for the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and those of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to promote stability and democratic governance in the region.

We welcome the holding of local elections in Senegal in January and of legislative elections in the Gambia in April. We take note of the outcome of the ECOWAS summit of 3 July and congratulate President Sissoco Embaló on his election to head the organization for the coming year.

We call for respect for the commitments undertaken for a return to constitutional order and the holding of elections in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. We also hope that the legislative elections to be held in Senegal this month and in Guinea-Bissau in December will take place in a calm environment. It is important to ensure the holding of free and transparent elections that are open to the participation of the opposition and of civil society as well as of significant numbers of women and young people.

Inclusive dialogues and institutional reforms are also necessary to consolidate democratic processes. In that regard, we welcome the advances made in the political dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire.

My second point concerns the security situation. France reiterates its concern at the spread of the terrorist threat in the region, of which civilians are the primary

victims. Countries such as Benin and Togo are also affected. In that context, France welcomes the adoption last month of a resolution on maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.

France will continue its security support to those countries in the region that request it, in coordination with their partners, in particular European partners. We are ready to, *inter alia*, reinforce our support to the coastal countries with which we are holding discussions. Efforts in the area of security must also be complemented by simultaneous action on governance and development, in the spirit of the International Coalition for the Sahel.

We support the efforts under way in the framework of the independent high-level panel on security and development in the Sahel, led by Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, and hope that they will produce operational recommendations that will allow us to better provide collective support to the countries of the Sahel.

We once again raise the alarm on the consequences of climate change and its effects on food security in the region. France remains committed to fighting the food crisis in West Africa, in particular through the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I would like to congratulate Brazil on assuming the presidency of the Council this month. I wish you every success, Sir. I also congratulate Albania on the successful conclusion of its presidency last month.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and Ambassador Fatima for their briefings. I also listened attentively to Ms. Magagi's statement.

Since assuming his duties, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif has led the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in actively carrying out political mediation. The Peacebuilding Commission has helped the countries concerned achieve lasting peace by means of the considerable amount of work accomplished by Ambassador Fatima. China appreciates their efforts.

Currently, West Africa and the Sahel is facing an increasingly complex political and security situation. Secretary-General Guterres visited the three countries in the region in May, calling on the international community to increase its attention and input so as to

help countries in the region cope with the challenges facing them.

In conjunction with the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/521) and the briefings we have heard, I would like to mention the following points.

First, we must remain committed to the overall approach of resolving political differences through dialogue. Since the beginning of the year, countries including Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Benin and Togo have been actively preparing for elections. Côte d'Ivoire has held a political dialogue, while the Gambia has held parliamentary elections. Many countries will start their election agendas next year. The international community should respect the sovereignty and leadership of countries of the region, support them in following development paths that suit their national conditions and assist the parties concerned in resolving their differences through dialogue. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recently held a summit, which made important decisions, such as lifting the sanctions against Mali. China supports Africa in finding African solutions to African issues. We support ECOWAS in continuing to maintain dialogue with countries in political transition in order to jointly advance that transition along the right track.

Secondly, we must pay close attention to maintaining security and stability in the region. Recently, violent terrorist forces in the region have launched frequent attacks, spreading their activities from the Sahel countries to coastal States along the Gulf of Guinea and seriously jeopardizing regional security and stability. Counter-terrorism is a comprehensive war, and countries in the region form an inseparable security community. China supports such countries in strengthening cooperation in terms of equipment, intelligence and logistical supplies, promoting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and actively and effectively curbing the spread of terrorism. When countries outside the region adjust their military deployment, it is necessary to strengthen communication and coordination with countries in the region to avoid creating any security vacuum.

The countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) are at the forefront of counter-terrorism and have made major efforts and great sacrifices to curb the spread of terrorist forces over the years. Their role in counter-terrorism in the region and the wider

African continent is irreplaceable. Counter-terrorism cooperation among the G-5 Sahel countries faced some difficulties in the past period. We hope that the five countries will seize the opportunity of ECOWAS lifting the sanctions against Mali to strengthen solidarity and cooperation, remove obstacles and build a regional counter-terrorism bulwark. The international community should provide sustained and predictable financial assistance to counter-terrorism operations in the region. China supports the African Union and ECOWAS in conducting a joint strategic assessment of the Sahel issue, giving new impetus to regional counter-terrorism cooperation.

Thirdly, we must strengthen national capacity-building in the region. West African countries face multiple challenges in the post-pandemic recovery. Thirty million people in the Sahel need humanitarian assistance; there are 6.2 million displaced persons, and food security is in a dire situation. That is really disconcerting. According to the Secretary-General's report, the lack of development funds and humanitarian assistance has become a severe challenge faced by many countries of the region. The international community and the relevant countries should maintain the level of assistance and honour their commitments through action. The focus should be on helping countries of the region to strengthen capacity-building and prevent and defuse threats. The maritime security situation in the Gulf of Guinea has improved, mainly thanks to the joint efforts of the countries of the region. China supports the international community in increasing its attention and input in that regard and in actively cooperating at the regional and international levels.

China pays attention to the challenges posed by climate change to countries of the region. During his visit to the region, the Secretary-General called on developed countries to honour their \$100 billion climate finance commitments to developing countries. We hope that developed countries will heed the call of the Secretary-General and provide tangible assistance to the countries of the region in adapting to the impact of climate change. On 24 June, China held a high-level dialogue on global development, announcing a series of major measures to implement the Global Development Initiative and calling on all parties to follow a development pattern featuring benefits for all, balance, coordination, inclusiveness, mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity. Such initiatives address tough issues, including difficulties

in the global economic recovery, the widening development gap between the North and the South, the lack of momentum for international development and cooperation and increasing marginalization of development issues. They are the common concerns of regional and developing countries. China is committed to building a global partnership for development, and we look forward to working with all to expedite the implementation of the outcomes of the high-level dialogue so as to leave no country and no one behind by making a greater contribution to the peaceful development of the countries of the region.

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

I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Annadif for his participation in our meeting and for his tireless efforts at the head of the United Nations Office for West Africa. I would also like to thank Ambassador Rabab Fatima for the highly informative briefing. We very much welcome the inputs on West Africa and the Sahel from the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and especially the opportunity of an exchange between the Council and the PBC, which could, and in fact should, happen more often. Finally, my warm thanks go to Ms. Rabia Magagi for enriching our meeting with her unique perspective as a champion for the rights of women and young people.

The situation in West Africa and the Sahel demonstrates how closely linked the political, security, economic and humanitarian dimensions of a crisis are. The lack of progress in one of those domains has a direct impact on the others.

In the region, we have witnessed ruptures of the constitutional order in several countries. The de facto authorities that have emerged after those ruptures often justify their actions by the alleged need to combat security threats more effectively.

The overthrow of the constitutional order generates a reaction in the domestic sphere, often intensifying the pre-existing conflicts and security threats, as well as at the international and regional levels, with sanctions being imposed by regional bodies.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/521) shows how the coup in Mali and disagreements over the pace of the transition in the country have impacted the efficacy of the Joint Force of the countries of the Sahel in fighting terrorism.

Brazil is therefore encouraged by the news that Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have come to an agreement on a time frame for the return of the constitutional order and the holding of constitutional, parliamentary and presidential elections. We welcome the fact that the ECOWAS leaders have deemed that conditions are in place for the lifting of sanctions against that country. We congratulate former President Goodluck Jonathan on his successful mediation efforts.

We are also encouraged by the progress made on a transition time frame in Burkina Faso. The participation of the opposition is indispensable to a truly meaningful agreement. As for Guinea, we note with concern that the authorities in Conakry have not accepted a mediator from ECOWAS. We urge them to engage with the opposition and with regional partners with a view to a return of civilian rule.

As I said, progress on the political front is necessary for the West Africa region to be able to tackle its significant security challenges. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, armed groups have been expanding their range of action from the Sahel towards the coast. Benin and Togo are already suffering the consequences of that trend. We take note of the efforts of the countries of the region to better coordinate their response to that threat.

On a more positive note, we welcome the improvement in the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea. Resolution 2634 (2022), adopted last May, demonstrates the commitment of the Security Council to addressing the issue.

The humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel is directly affected by the actions of armed groups, which have caused the displacement of millions of people. As a result, economic activities are disrupted, the education of children is interrupted and lives are shattered.

Moreover, livelihoods across the region are being affected by rising food and fuel prices, increasing food insecurity. Brazil has a long-standing partnership with the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote trilateral South-South cooperation, including in countries in the West Africa region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its deliberations in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at noon.