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Seventy-seventh year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Biang	(Gabon)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Moran
	Kenya	Ms. Mbabu
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/731)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2022/731)

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

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/731, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr. Wane (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Security Council once again on the situation in Mali. At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council, for your continued support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Since the members of the Council already have the report of the Secretary-General before them (S/2022/731), I will focus on the main developments in Mali and MINUSMA efforts since June.

First, and as noted in the Secretary-General's report, following the agreement reached in early July between Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the transition timetable, significant progress has been made in preparing for the elections. In the lead-up to the constitutional referendum scheduled for March 2023, the commission responsible

for drafting the constitution, which began its work in late June, held a series of consultations with a wide range of Malian stakeholders in July and August. That work culminated in the presentation of the draft constitution to the transitional President on 11 October. The draft is based on the recommendations of the national dialogue on the reform process, with an emphasis on good governance and combating corruption.

The draft also provides for the establishment of a bicameral parliament, with the creation of a national high council, and recognizes alternative methods of dispute resolution, with provisions that will greatly facilitate the implementation of the 2015 the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process. The draft constitution is expected to be adopted by the Council of Ministers by the end of November and then be put to a referendum.

Following the adoption of the Electoral Law in June and its subsequent entry into force, steps were also taken to establish a single body, the Independent Authority for Election Management. The Authority's 15 members were officially appointed on 12 October. The Authority will now proceed with the operationalization of the various national, regional and local structures and coordination units within Mali's diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

I would also like to add that the mechanism for monitoring the timetable of the political and electoral reform, which involves the Malian parties, including a number of ministers, including Mr. Diop, and the multilateral partners concerned — ECOWAS, the African Union and MINUSMA — is now fully operational, both at the technical and political levels. Its steering committee has met four times thus far, with the most recent meeting having taken place on 13 October.

Those advances are therefore commendable, but it is also clear that the success of the electoral process will depend on a multitude of factors, including the availability of financial and logistical resources and the evolution of the security situation, which has an impact on all stages of the electoral cycle. Enhancing the inclusiveness of the process will also be important. On that note, it is worth mentioning that between July and October, the Malian Government held six consultations with political parties and civil society on different aspects of the electoral process. MINUSMA and the United Nations Country Team are actively involved in supporting the electoral process, providing important

technical and logistical support and participating in the follow-up mechanism. An integrated electoral support plan for the 2020 to 2024 electoral cycle is currently being finalized.

Since August, there have been encouraging developments in the peace process. In early August, the long-awaited high-level decision-making meeting was held and resulted in the adoption of the Government's proposal to integrate 26,000 combatants into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and other Malian State structures. During the meeting, consensus was also reached on the way forward for the institutional reforms required for the implementation of the Agreement. Subsequently, the follow-up committee for the Agreement held two meetings — a ministerial meeting on 2 September chaired by Foreign Minister Lamamra of Algeria and an ordinary meeting on 11 October — thus marking the resumption of the work of that structure, which is essential to dialogue between the Malian parties and ensuring interaction between them and the international mediators. I would also like to add that three of the four sub-committees of the follow-up committee for the Agreement have also resumed their work. The last sub-committee is expected to meet shortly.

Steps are being taken to follow up on the outcome of the meeting at the decision-making level, with a particular emphasis on the operationalization of the ad hoc commission responsible for making recommendations, on a case-by-case basis, on how to manage the issue of senior members of the signatory movements, including in relation to the issue of the chain of command. The terms of reference of that commission have been approved, and its members should be appointed shortly. The successful completion of that commission's work will pave the way for the launch of the comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process.

In parallel, MINUSMA and the two Malian commissions in charge of the DDR process and integration, respectively, have made visits to the regions to assess the logistical and technical conditions necessary for the launch of comprehensive DDR process. I must add here that those visits were particularly well received, by both the local authorities and the local populations.

Here again, in terms of the peace process, MINUSMA is actively involved alongside others in the

international mediation process, including its leader and Algeria. In addition to monitoring the ceasefire on an ongoing basis, the Mission is using its good offices and providing significant technical, logistical and financial support to the implementation of the peace process.

Finally, with regard to the situation in central Mali, on 24 August the Malian Government adopted a strategy to stabilize this region which, as the Council knows, has been a long-standing request of the Security Council. The strategy is based on four axes: peace, security and social cohesion; governance and justice; economic and humanitarian recovery; and communication and cooperation. In addition to providing support to developing that strategy, MINUSMA has also been working to align its activities with the strategy's priorities. A mapping of our activities to date shows that more than 100 projects, some completed, some ongoing and some planned, are in line with the Government's strategy, covering areas such as training, infrastructure rehabilitation, reconciliation and the promotion of social cohesion.

It should also be noted that the transitional authorities are implementing a much more ambitious reform programme, in accordance with the recommendations of the national dialogue on the reform process, to improve governance in Mali. As the Council is aware, governance-related challenges and shortcomings that date back several years are at the heart of the crisis in Mali. We plan to work closely with the Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team, to see how we can support the overall reform agenda.

(spoke in English)

The developments that I have just highlighted are unfolding against the backdrop of a very challenging security, humanitarian and human rights situation, with severe consequences for civilians across large parts of the country. As outlined in the Secretary-General's report, the security remains volatile in the centre of Mali and in the tri-border area between Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger. Since March, there has been a sharp increase in the activities of extremist elements affiliated with the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and with Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin in the Ménaka and Gao regions. The extremist groups are taking advantage of security voids that the Malian forces are striving to fill and are fighting for territorial control while targeting the Malian forces and MINUSMA alike.

In that context, MINUSMA strives to better protect civilians, keeping in mind the State's primary responsibility in that regard. In Ménaka, for instance, since I last briefed the Council in June (see S/PV.9061), the Mission has enhanced its presence with the redeployment of a company initially based in Ansongo, making it possible to increase ground patrols in the city and its surroundings in close cooperation with the Malian armed forces while similar operations are being carried out by MINUSMA police. Armed air assets based in Timbuktu have also been mobilized to conduct deterrence operations in the region, as well as in the Gao area, amplifying our collective response to the security situation.

Other measures relate to the deployment of long-range patrols, including, currently, in the Talataye area and the Ansongo cercle in the Gao region, and the activation of integrated teams, as was the case on 5 September, when the Gao Head of Office led a mission to Ansongo town to assess the humanitarian situation in the area following threats by the Islamic State. MINUSMA also launched foreign intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights over the Talataye area in September to identify locations with internally displaced persons (IDPs) stranded following the clashes on 6 September between the Islamic State and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin. That said, we have to acknowledge that the needs on the ground far outweigh MINUSMA's abilities with its current resources. The prevailing security situation in Ménaka and the Gao region underscores the need for greater coordination between MINUSMA and the Malian forces. It also points to the urgency of completing the DDR process and deploying the reconstituted army, as that will significantly enhance the ability of the Malian State to address the current challenges.

The security situation in the centre of the country also remains fragile. Although the Malian Defence and Security Forces continue to put pressure on groups affiliated with Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, extremist elements retain the capacity to conduct coordinated attacks on the Malian armed forces, sabotage infrastructure and terrorize local communities through reprisal attacks. Examples include the coordinated attacks on the Malian armed forces in various locations in July; the attack on the village of Diallassagou in June; and the blockade from May to September of national road 16, a major supply route, hampering freedom of movement and halting

commercial activities. The number of attacks targeting the southern part of the country have also increased, unfortunately.

While the fight against terrorism necessarily includes a military and security component, it is obvious that no lasting results can be achieved if two basic conditions are not met. The first is the need for these efforts to be complemented by a restoration of State authority and the rebuilding of trust with local communities. In that respect, the full implementation of the newly adopted Malian strategy for the stabilization of the central region and similar efforts elsewhere in the country will be critical. Secondly, it is imperative that every effort be made to ensure that Government-led military operations are carried out in compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law and that the perpetrators of violations and abuse are held to account. That point can never be emphasized enough.

For its part, MINUSMA will continue to monitor and investigate any reports of alleged violations and abuses. The latest quarterly human rights report for the period from April to June found that the overall number of violations had decreased and that terrorist groups were the main perpetrators. The next quarterly report covering the period from July to September will be published in the next two weeks. That line of work is a critical component of our mandate, as determined by the Council, and its sole purpose is to contribute to the promotion of lasting peace and stability. We therefore look forward to the full cooperation of the Malian authorities in the implementation of that aspect of our mandate.

It is in that spirit that MINUSMA is supporting, in parallel, initiatives by the Malian authorities to strengthen respect for human rights and reinforce the fight against impunity. During the reporting period, the Mission conducted 13 human rights trainings for security forces and other national stakeholders. One such example relates to the project between MINUSMA and the army staff headquarters, which in February began working to ensure the integration of human rights norms and standards in the planning and conduct of military operations, including through the institutionalization of human rights education in the curricula of training institutions for defence personnel in Mali. The Mission is also providing technical assistance to strengthen the legal framework for the promotion and protection of human rights and other related issues. With technical support from MINUSMA, a national criminal policy

and prosecutorial strategy on terrorist-related crimes was adopted by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights on 12 September. The Mission continues to provide support on military justice, as well as to the Specialized Judicial Unit against Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime.

The current environment has compounded the humanitarian situation in the country. The number of IDPs rose from 350,000 to more than 422,000 in the centre and north, while more than 175,000 Malian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. More than 1.8 million people are facing severe food insecurity — a figure that could rise to 2.3 million by November. More than 1.2 million children under the age of five are affected by acute malnutrition. As of May, more than 1,950 schools in Mali were closed due to insecurity, affecting nearly 600,000 children, mainly in the central regions of Mali. The laudable efforts of humanitarian actors to meet those needs are hampered by a lack of adequate and sustainable funding. So far, only 30 per cent of the \$686 million requested for 2022 has been mobilized.

In view of those developments, let me conclude by underlining that the situation in Mali continues to warrant sustained international attention and engagement, particularly from the Council, which for the past 10 years or so has unwaveringly supported the country's stabilization. The people of Mali have demonstrated great resilience amid multiple challenges. They continue to forge ahead and harbour a strong desire for peace and stability. Their efforts deserve the full support of the international community, and it bears emphasizing that stabilizing Mali is a *sine qua non* for the stabilization of the entire region.

Against that backdrop, MINUSMA will continue to do all it can to enhance the effectiveness of its response. In that respect, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's call for the urgent provision of missing capabilities of long standing. MINUSMA has shown extraordinary resilience, given its difficult operating environment. We are using our resources as creatively and flexibly as possible and our men and women on the ground are going to great lengths to fulfil the objectives that have been set. However, that determination cannot be a substitute for the assets we so desperately need to do our job.

As the Secretary-General points out in his report, to a large extent the Mission's effectiveness is

also contingent on the extent of the cooperation we receive from the Malian authorities. I welcomed the outcome of the coordination meeting held with the Malian authorities in early August, which paved the way for a resumption of rotations and the subsequent establishment of a technical committee to look at various aspects of our partnership. The Mission is committed to engaging constructively with the Malian authorities to address the challenges at hand, ensure full transparency and create the necessary environment for the successful execution of its mandate, including with regard to freedom of movement, in conformity with the status of forces agreement. Now is more than ever the time to work together and with urgency in order to deliver on the aspirations of the people of Mali and, more broadly, the region.

Yesterday, as has unfortunately often been the case throughout the Mission's deployment, an improvised explosive device struck again, killing four of our peacekeepers and wounding two others. They join the many Malian, United Nations and other international service members, as well as countless Malian civilians, who have paid the ultimate price in our collective endeavour for peace. That is a stark reminder of the fact that the international community and the Malian people are all in this together. We can only win this battle together, and the United Nations, in spite of the inherent limitations of peacekeeping, offers the best framework for achieving lasting peace in Mali and the broader Sahel.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing and welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

I will be brief: Mali is today at a crossroads. The first steps have been taken in recent months. In July, an agreement was reached between the Malian authorities and the Economic Community of West African States on the timeline for the transition, with a view to a return to constitutional order and the organization of elections by February 2024. The enactment of the Electoral Law was a starting point, and a draft constitution, which is to be put to a referendum in the near future, has been drafted.

In September, the Agreement Monitoring Committee met for the first time in more than a year, with decisive momentum to that end provided by Algeria.

Those steps were important and must lead to concrete and rapid results, because the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the return of democracy can come only from the Malian parties themselves. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to support them, as provided for in its mandate.

I want to pay tribute to the men and women who have served in the Mission since its inception nine years ago. MINUSMA is one of the most dangerous missions of the United Nations. Every year, as members of the Security Council, we assume the responsibility of renewing its mandate, because we believe that this commitment is worthwhile: for the protection of the Malian people and their rights, for national reconciliation and for peace and stability in the region.

That brings me to my second message: MINUSMA is today a Mission in danger. The threat is, first and foremost, a security threat. Terrorist groups are extending their reach and increasing the number of their victims. We call on Mali to renew cooperation and trust with its partners in the subregion in order to present a united front against that cross-border threat.

That threat also affects MINUSMA, which has lost nine peacekeepers since June. I offer my condolences to Chad, which was in mourning yesterday, and to Egypt, Guinea, Jordan and the families of the victims.

It would be unacceptable to expose peacekeepers to such risks without the full and robust cooperation of the host State, in accordance with its Headquarters agreement and resolutions 2518 (2020) and 2589 (2021). However, we note certain obstacles to the Mission's activities. France is very concerned by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/731), in which he refers, in particular, to 20 cases of restrictions on the Mission's ground movements and 22 cases of restrictions on its air movements. The last point is particularly worrisome, as evacuation by helicopter is sometimes the only way to save an injured soldier.

There is also the question of operations conducted by national forces with the support of the Wagner Group's mercenaries. The reports on the number of civilian casualties and the fact that they target certain

communities in particular are extremely serious. We urge the Malian authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of those abuses are held accountable for their actions and that the investigations that have been announced are brought to a conclusion.

France calls for the January strategic review to provide clear answers to those questions and put all options on the table. The review is an opportunity for a frank discussion with the Malian authorities, both about their expectations of MINUSMA, but also their commitment to ensuring that the Mission can fully implement its mandate.

No one wants MINUSMA to leave Mali. Polls show that the Mission is most appreciated in the most remote areas for its security support and its humanitarian role.

We are counting on the spirit of responsibility of the transitional authorities not to hasten a departure of which the Malian people would be the first victims.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Mali at today's meeting.

At the outset, allow me to express our deepest condolences to the bereaved families of four peacekeepers from Chad who lost their lives in an improvised explosive device attack a few days back. We also express our deepest condolences to the families of peacekeepers from other troop-contributing countries, namely, Egypt, Guinea and Jordan, who lost their lives in recent months. We strongly condemn those attacks and call upon the Malian authorities to bring the perpetrators of such heinous crimes to justice and establish accountability for crimes committed against the United Nations peacekeepers.

The ongoing efforts to expedite the transition process in Mali has made some significant progress in recent months, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/731). The Malian authorities and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have agreed on the transitional time frame; the Electoral Law has been adopted; the Independent Authority for Election Management has been established; and the process of drafting a new constitution has begun.

We welcome those positive developments. We believe those measures provide a solid foundation for the transition process and for the restoration of civilian order at the end of the transition period in 2024. We join others in appreciating the steadfast engagement of ECOWAS in Mali.

The implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains fundamental for lasting peace in northern Mali. In that regard, we welcome the high-level meeting held in August and the Agreement Monitoring Committee session held on 2 September. Those meetings have brought together the signatory movements and transitional authorities. A decision on the integration of ex-combatants in two phases, if implemented in a timely manner, should positively contribute to peace and stability in northern Mali. In addition, the extension of State authority, particularly the civilian and security apparatus, should be given priority, given the worsening security situation.

Terrorist groups, such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, who are indoctrinated with the terrorist ideologies of Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, have continued to gain ground in Mali. While the Malian Defence and Security Forces have been deployed in the north, they have not been able to stop those terrorist groups from expanding to the west and south of Mali, including to urban centres. Reprisal attacks have increased in recent months targeting the civilian population as well. That has been elaborated in detail by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in his briefing. That is a dangerous escalation and cannot be ignored. The challenge of terrorism in Mali needs to be accorded high priority and treated with the same level of urgency as other global hotspots that face the scourge of international terrorism. In that regard, the counter-terrorism operations conducted by countries in the region should be coordinated to enhance their overall effectiveness.

The role of MINUSMA remains critical in helping Mali to achieve stability. The Mission continues to operate in an increasingly dangerous asymmetric threat environment. While we appreciate the efforts taken to address safety and security issues concerning United Nations peacekeepers, it is equally important not to burden MINUSMA with direct counter-terrorism-related operations. Those counter-terrorism operations need to be undertaken by the national security forces, which command a better understanding of the terrain

and local dynamics. We also encourage the Mission to augment its resources to meet the shortfalls arising from the withdrawal of international forces from Mali.

In conclusion, the crisis in Mali is rooted in systemic multidimensional challenges. The long-standing shortcomings in the administrative, constitutional and security setup cannot be addressed in the absence of political stability. A lasting solution to the Malian crisis can be achieved only through a Mali-owned and -led political process that is inclusive and representative. It is important that the international community stand in solidarity with the people of Mali in these challenging times. India remains steadfast in its support for the people of Mali in their quest for enduring peace, security and development.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Foreign Minister Diop to this meeting. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing.

From the briefing we can see that there has been positive progress in terms of advancing the political transition and peace process and fighting terrorism in Mali. That is a result of the joint efforts by the Government, regional organizations and the international community. Now it is important to consolidate the current positive momentum and continuously inject new impetus into efforts towards the ultimate goal of achieving durable peace and development.

First, multiple measures are required on various tracks in order to promote the political process. The Government has drawn up the transitional road map, set up constitutional organizations, started constitutional work and engaged in political consultation. Those actions constitute visible progress. We hope that the parties will work on that basis, implement the outcome of the national reconstruction conference and advance political reform in order to create and build favourable conditions for the transition, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2022/731).

Meanwhile, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report, the work of consolidating the central Government, improving the judiciary, boosting people's livelihoods and promoting ethnic harmony is of equal importance and requires further efforts. The international community and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are called upon to provide support to the Government in forming a development strategy

commensurate with its national conditions, enhancing its capacity-building and promoting sustainable development so as to lay a solid foundation for durable peace. We are pleased to see that, upon the lifting of sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States, Mali has rejoined the big family of West Africa. We hope that the countries of the region will work towards the same goal and jointly maintain regional peace and unity.

Secondly, we must step up the fight against terrorism and maintain stability. The parties concerned in Mali recently held a high-level decision-making meeting in order to promote the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, under the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The Government has been fully engaged in fighting terrorism and has unveiled a comprehensive strategy to ensure stability in the central region. Those efforts should be acknowledged. The international community should provide more concrete support for the Government's efforts to fight terrorism, maintain stability and respect the country's right to independently carry out its external cooperation in terms of security.

However, the Mission should provide greater support for implementing the peace agreement, maintaining central stability and protecting civilians. Those are its core mandates. In delivering its human rights mandate, the Mission should seek the views of the Government and continue to communicate and cooperate closely with the Government.

At the same time, fighting terrorism in Mali has a direct bearing on the overall stability of the Sahel region. The Secretary-General and the President of the African Union Commission have jointly asked former President Issoufou of the Niger to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the Sahel issue. China supports that effort and hopes that the assessment will take on board the concerns of all parties and offer practical recommendations for counter-terrorism cooperation between the Sahel and West Africa.

Thirdly, it is important to support increased coordination and communication between MINUSMA and the various sectors of society and for them to work in synergy. The Mission has done a great deal to support the political transition, to provide logistical and operational support to the Malian army and to protect civilians.

China is pleased to see that the Mission has properly solved the issue of rotating personnel with the Government. We hope that the parties will continue to strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and jointly maintain the status-of-forces agreement so as to create favourable conditions for MINUSMA.

Since its establishment, the Mission has been growing, with mandates increasing in all sectors. That, to some degree, has limited its resources and affected its ability to fully implement its core mandate. We hope that the Secretariat, in line with the assessment of the Mission, fully considers the view of the Government and takes into account the needs and priorities of the country as it puts forward proposals on streamlining and optimizing the Mission's mandate and provides a rational arrangement of personnel and resources so as to enhance its ability to deliver on its mandate and ensure the effectiveness of its action.

On Monday, several Chadian peacekeepers came under attack and were killed. That is really sad to see. The Mission should enhance its ability to deal with improvised explosive devices and increase its ability to carry out medical evacuations. As co-Chair of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers, together with Brazil, Indonesia and Rwanda, we held a seminar last month on this issue and obtained good results. We must translate the consensus of Member States into concrete actions within the Mission in order to better protect peacekeepers.

China attaches great importance to Mali's legitimate concerns in terms of national sovereignty, security and development and supports the people independently choosing a suitable development path. Together with the international community, we are ready to step up our contribution to the country's efforts to maintain its national unity and to protect peace and development.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing and leadership. We also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Diop.

Since this is the last regular briefing on Mali and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) during our term on the Security Council, allow me to share three thoughts on the past years.

First, we are deeply saddened, again, by the loss of life and injuries in MINUSMA yesterday and today. We

extend our condolences to their loved ones, to Chad, and pay tribute to all peacekeepers for their service. Yet again, we see the extremely tough circumstances that the Blue Helmets are facing in Mali. And during the past year we have become increasingly concerned as the Malian Government imposes new restrictions on the Mission with regard to personnel rotations, flights and access. Those restrictions all limit the Mission's ability to fulfil its mandate.

We are also concerned about the detention of Ivorian soldiers and call for their urgent release, in the spirit of fraternal relations between the peoples of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali.

To be clear — MINUSMA's Security Council mandate and the status-of-forces agreement must be fully respected. Considering the constraints imposed on the Mission, the Secretary-General's upcoming review must be an honest one, with all options on the table. Following that report, the Council, in consultation with troop- and police-contributing countries, must consider necessary adjustments — again, with all options on the table.

Secondly, when the Malian military decided to take power by force, it also took on tremendous responsibilities. One such responsibility is to protect the civilian population from human rights violations and abuses. That situation, unfortunately, is not improving. The main perpetrators are terrorists and armed groups. But we are also deeply concerned about reports of violations and abuses committed by the Malian armed forces and the Wagner Group.

We call on all parties to implement the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Violations of international law against children must end and be prevented. We further call on the Government to address the growing number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence.

Thirdly, there are also some hopeful developments, which deserve to be encouraged. The agreement with Economic Community of West African States on the transition timeline is crucial and must be adhered to. The adoption of the new electoral law and the nomination of an electoral committee is therefore encouraging.

The Malian authorities have a clear responsibility to contribute to the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We therefore welcome the increasing number of women in the follow-

up committee for the Agreement. Norway will continue to support progress towards more inclusivity and the return to constitutional order. In that regard, we also note the new draft constitution.

In conclusion, despite all the challenges over the past years, what we have seen from New York and Bamako is a United Nations that has shown an extraordinary commitment to Mali. If circumstances allow, MINUSMA, Norway and many other partners stand ready to continue that support.

Ms. Moran (Ireland): Let me too welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Diop. I also want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for his briefing this morning.

Ireland is extremely concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Mali. We join other speakers in condemning the attacks that targeted civilians, peacekeepers and national security forces in recent months. I want to express our sincere condolences to all those impacted, including the families of the four Chadian peacekeepers killed in recent days.

The Security Council has regrettably become accustomed to sobering briefings on the situation in Mali. But just 21 months ago, when Ireland joined the Council, we hoped that a civilian-led transition would see Mali return to constitutional order by February 2022. We hoped that the efforts to address the violence, reduce humanitarian need and protect civilians were making an impact; and we hoped that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali would accelerate. Regrettably, the situation in Mali has deteriorated on almost every front since then.

Political and institutional reforms are necessary in order to resolve the considerable challenges in Mali. Long-term progress can be legitimately pursued only by a civilian-led and democratically elected Government. The political transition must be genuinely inclusive, involving civil society, including women and young people.

We urge the Malian authorities to continue to engage with the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and ensure that the electoral timetable is followed. In that regard, we welcome efforts to operationalize the Independent Authority for Election Management. That body must be independent and inclusive to ensure the

credibility of the elections, which must be completed by February 2024.

While the recent focus has been on the political transition, we cannot lose sight of the importance of the peace agreement. Its implementation is vital. We welcome the commitments made at the recent high-level decision-making meeting. The concrete implementation of those commitments must now follow.

Ireland condemns the ongoing violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law. The fact that violations attributed to the Malian Defence and Security Forces accounted for more than a quarter of incidents in MINUSMA's human rights report is of particular concern. The ongoing allegations about the activities of the Wagner Group in Mali are also deeply disturbing.

Furthermore, the 40 per cent increase in the reported instances of conflict-related sexual violence is simply unacceptable. We urge the Mission and the transitional authorities to step up prevention and protection efforts. We reiterate that human rights abuses and violations must be investigated promptly, transparently and thoroughly. Perpetrators must be held accountable, regardless of affiliation or nationality.

The deepening protection crisis is exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation. It has forced tens of thousands of people in the centre and the north of the country to flee in recent months. It simply must be addressed

In that context, the restrictions placed on MINUSMA's operations, particularly on its protection-of-civilians and human rights taskings, are inexcusable. We call on the transitional authorities to cooperate with MINUSMA and ensure freedom of movement.

The ongoing review of MINUSMA is an opportunity for progress, but only if it asks and answers the hard questions. An assessment of the relationship between the Mission and the host country must be at the heart of the review. It should produce comprehensive options for the future of the Mission.

However, no matter which strategic option is pursued, a sustainable solution to the issues facing Mali will be found only by repairing the social contract. That is much more than a peace operation can achieve on its own. It requires the buy-in of the Malian authorities

and their positive engagement with the international community and the United Nations system.

I conclude by urging Security Council cooperation on Mali — something that has been sorely lacking over the past year. We owe that to our peacekeepers, to the humanitarian workers and to the people of Mali.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me thank Special Representative Wane for his informative briefing and for his efforts to bring peace to Mali. It is clear from his briefing that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to make vital contributions to Mali's security, peace process and democratic transition despite the unprecedented challenges that the Mission now faces. I also want to welcome Foreign Minister Diop to our meeting today, and I look forward to his briefing to the Security Council as well.

I want to begin by expressing my deep condolences, as the Council heard from other speakers, to the families of the victims of yesterday's brutal attack on MINUSMA personnel. It is not the first time that that happened, but it has to stop. We must continue to press for concrete action to ensure the safety of peacekeepers in Mali and around the world.

In that vein, we must work together to ensure the freedom of movement of MINUSMA personnel throughout Mali. The ongoing restrictions against MINUSMA and United Nations personnel, including no-fly zones, visa denials and refusals of ground patrols and flight clearances, have severely impacted the Mission's ability to fulfil the task that the Security Council itself mandated. Attempts to obstruct MINUSMA's important and often life-saving work to protect Malian civilians and investigate violations of their rights are simply unacceptable. Not only do those restrictions put Malian civilians at greater risk, but they also compromise the safety and security of MINUSMA personnel, who bravely serve in the most dangerous United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The efforts of MINUSMA to protect civilians in that volatile region and its work to facilitate intercommunal dialogue, defuse tensions and prevent conflict at the local level deserve our full support. Those that impede the ability of MINUSMA to anticipate, deter and effectively respond to threats against civilians are playing with fire. Their actions in fact allow violent

extremist groups to conduct attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and Malian forces.

We implore the transitional Government to lift all restrictions against MINUSMA and allow the Mission and its personnel to safely do their jobs. We condemn the uptick in disinformation campaigns, which sow distrust and erode local confidence in MINUSMA. Such obstructionists of MINUSMA's operations threaten the Mission's mandate to monitor and investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses against Malians. That work has never been more critical.

We are appalled by the reports of human rights violations and abuses allegedly perpetrated by violent extremist groups and by the Malian armed forces, in partnership with the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, as we heard from previous speakers earlier. We call for those responsible to be held accountable. The Wagner Group forces will not bring peace, but only exploitation and instability, to Mali. Human rights abuses and violations in the name of counter-terrorism operations only deepen mistrust of the State authorities and play into the hands of violent extremist groups, who recruit among the aggrieved and the disillusioned.

We are also deeply concerned that the presence of Wagner Group forces obstructs the implementation of the peace agreement. In central Mali, the continued absence of State services and authority, combined with the lack of an overarching vision for that region, has continued to fuel a vicious cycle of instability. We urge the transition Government to accelerate efforts aimed at restoring its presence in the centre and at implementing the recently approved draft strategy for the stabilization of the centre and the action plan for 2022-2024.

In the light of the challenges facing MINUSMA in Mali, I want to stress that the United States has a strong desire in support of the Secretary-General's internal review to offer a candid assessment of MINUSMA's ability to fulfil its mandate, and we hope to see a broad range of options for the future of the Mission. But while the challenges facing MINUSMA are indisputable, we should all be encouraged by recent developments. Although it is limited and long overdue, the transition authorities in Mali have made progress towards restoring democracy, civilian rule and constitutional order, including by adopting a new electoral law and submitting a draft Constitution. We urge the transition authorities to overcome internal and political rivalries

to accelerate the transition process. Leaders must prepare for and complete the constitutional referendum and local, legislative and presidential elections.

The Malian people, who have put their faith in transition leaders to peacefully restore democracy within the agreed-upon time frame, deserve nothing less. We also welcome the increased representations of women on the Agreement Monitoring Committee. This is a positive step towards ensuring the full, meaningful and equal inclusion of women in the peace process and throughout the electoral transition. The United States commends the armed groups signatories of the Algiers accords for resuming the regular functioning of the bodies charged with implementing the agreement following their almost year-long hiatus. As the Secretary-General notes, these forums are critical to peacefully resolving disputes between the parties.

But we were alarmed to learn that the Malian armed forces had clashed with a signatory armed group for the first time since 2017. A return to hostilities among the parties would have unthinkable consequences for the stability of Mali and for the broader region. Such conflict must be prevented by accelerating the implementation of the peace accords.

We support the people of Mali. In that vein, I want to again express our strong support for MINUSMA's peacekeepers, who serve with dedication despite serious challenges to protect Malian civilians. I want to reiterate that, for the sake of their own safety and security, but also for the viability of the Mission, they must be allowed to perform their duties without obstruction.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Wane for his briefing, which has provided us with an opportunity to underscore our support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and our gratitude to the troop- and police-contributing countries that enable this vital peacekeeping operation to function. My delegation also welcomes Foreign Minister Diop to today's meeting.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/731) includes disturbing information about violations of international law and international humanitarian law. We call on the Malian authorities to address this situation. We also remain deeply concerned about terrorist activities in Mali, particularly in Gao, Ménaka and the border territory between Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger. We have received with dismay

each report of civilian deaths and projections of the displacement of thousands of Malian families. We were appalled by the 7 August attack in Tessit that led to the death of more than 40 soldiers from the Malian Defence and Security Forces. We were also deeply worried at the events on 6 September in Talataye.

We reiterate our firm condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. There is no justification for acts of such cruelty. We underline our support for the efforts by the Malian Defence and Security Forces to fight terrorism.

We underscore the significance of improving communications between soldiers and local populations to ensure support for military operations and reduce casualties among civilians. We deem it vital that the Malian authorities refrain from acts that impose restrictions on MINUSMA's work, primarily those actions that affect peacekeepers' freedom of movement and their rotation of contingents. Reinforcing strategic communications within MINUSMA's activities is also critical.

A second point that I want to make focuses on the protection of civilians and the safety of peacekeepers in Mali. We condemn in the strongest terms yesterday's attack against MINUSMA near Tessalit. We extend our condolences to the families of the Chad peacekeepers who were killed and wish a full recovery to those who were wounded. In fact, MINUSMA has suffered the highest number of casualties of all United Nations peacekeeping operations in recent years. The Council and the Mission's leadership should do their best to minimize security risks on the ground.

We condemn the misinformation and disinformation campaigns that threaten Blue Helmets' security and make it challenging for MINUSMA to carry out crucial parts of its mandate. We recall the Security Council's decision that individuals and entities implicated in planning or conducting attacks against peacekeepers in Mali, as well as those planning or committing acts on Malian soil that constitute human rights violations, including actions concerning the targeting of civilians, may be subject to multilateral sanctions. We hope that MINUSMA will take adequate measures to address the unique risks to the safety of its peacekeepers while providing vital protection to civilians in Mali.

I would like to address one further point: Mali's political transition. Restoring the constitutional order remains critical. We acknowledge the timetable

establishing March 2024 as a transition landing point and hope so establishing it stimulates the transitional authorities to make progress. We call on Mali's authorities to pay particular attention to the Algiers peace agreement in the coming months.

Support from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) could be vital to achieving additional milestones in implementing the peace agreement. ECOWAS remains an essential partner for Mali in its political transition. We commend the regional organization's leadership and efforts on this critical issue.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Special Representative El-Ghassim Wane for his valuable briefing, and we welcome the participation of Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, in today's meeting.

The persistence of violence in Mali is a major source of serious challenges facing the country, whether they be political or security challenges or the alarming deterioration of the humanitarian situation, compounded by food insecurity. The situation requires a comprehensive approach to address the violence, which particularly affects women and children.

Ending the violence requires continued dialogue among Malian stakeholders in order to reach consensus on what the country needs. It also requires continuing to build on gains made in the context of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. That will provide the opportunity for further measures to address the security situation that we hope will improve the humanitarian and economic conditions in Mali.

We find it encouraging that the Malian authorities have adopted a stabilization strategy for the country's central regions and that they recently reached an agreement with armed groups to integrate 26,000 ex-combatants into Malian institutions. It is important here to continue empowering women and enhancing their role in building State institutions in order to ensure sustainable peace.

In the context of the ongoing cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Mali on the constitutional arrangements in the country, which is also encouraging, we stress the importance of sustained regional cooperation in order to help countries strengthen their capabilities in a manner that responds to the aspirations of their peoples. Such

regional cooperation is particularly important when addressing the cross-border threats to the security of Mali and the region posed by terrorist groups. Council members are aware of the regional ambitions of those terrorist groups, which are not limited to controlling Mali alone. They also seek to spread violence and destruction in the wider Sahel region, which is a centre of gravity for the security and development of the African continent. It will therefore be essential to continue implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and we hope that the recommendations to be made through the independent assessment led by former President Mahamadou Issoufou will guide our joint approach to finding sustainable solutions to the various challenges in the region, especially terrorism. While the regional leadership remains an essential pillar, the international community has a responsibility to support regional efforts such as the Accra Initiative, the Nouakchott process and the Group of Five for the Sahel, and to assist countries of the region in securing their borders.

In the light of the escalating levels of violence and terrorist attacks, especially in densely populated areas, which the United Arab Emirates strongly condemns, efforts must be intensified to enable peacekeeping troops to carry out their mandates safely and ensure unimpeded access to those in need, especially in the light of the increasing attacks on peacekeeping forces, the latest of which was yesterday's attack in Kidal. Peacekeepers must be provided with the necessary equipment to protect themselves, especially from explosive devices. We want to take this opportunity to emphasize our support for the tireless efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and express our sincere appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries. Since peacekeeping operations are considered a multilateral partnership, we stress the importance of continued cooperation among all relevant actors. We look forward to discussing the Secretary-General's upcoming strategic review of MINUSMA and how best to implement its mandate.

In conclusion, while security issues remain a primary concern, other challenges cannot be overlooked. They include the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the repercussions of climate change. The international community should take them into account in the context of providing financial assistance to the Malian people.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Kenya and my own country, Ghana (A3). We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/731) and thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General El-Ghassim Wane for his briefing. We also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, at today's meeting.

Since the Security Council was last briefed on the situation in Mali, three months ago (see S/PV.9061), significant developments have taken place in the country, including on the political front. While we acknowledge some gains in addressing the crisis there, the political, security and humanitarian situations remain challenging.

On the political front, we welcome the agreement reached between Mali and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the transitional timetable for elections to be held in March 2024, as well as the adoption and promulgation of the Electoral Law and the elaboration of a new constitution. Support by the international community for the implementation of the commission created in July to monitor the timetable for political and institutional reforms is essential if constitutional order is to be restored in Mali in a transparent and inclusive manner. The convening of the high-level decision-making meeting in August is also a significant development, as it has created an atmosphere conducive to reconciliation — a necessary ingredient for the consolidation of peace in Mali. Support for sustaining such processes is essential, as it will help consolidate the gains made so far and accelerate progress towards the realization of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali.

Despite those positive developments, Mali is not out of the woods yet. The A3 urges for the firm and timely implementation of the peace agreement. We encourage stronger political will on the part of the Malian authorities to make good on their commitments. We support close monitoring in that regard by the local monitoring committee, made up of representatives of the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and the United Nations.

With regard to the security situation, we remain concerned about the heightened threats posed by the expanding terrorist groups and growing intercommunal violence in Mali. The evolving nature of the terrorist activities, including the increasing use of improvised

explosive devices, has resulted in deadly attacks on civilians and civilian objects. The reconfiguration of international counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel, including the withdrawal of the French forces from Mali, has also created capability gaps. Furthermore, the decision by some of the troop-contributing countries to withdraw their troops by the close of the year could worsen the situation. While we commend the Malian authorities for the steps taken to fill the gaps through an increased military presence in parts of the country — accompanied by the redeployment of the civilian administration and the adoption of a stabilization strategy and action plan for the central regions — challenges still remain. Additional steps must therefore be taken to generate capabilities under the force adaptation plan and to augment the troops in a manner that clearly responds to the actual political and security dynamics in the country.

The heightened levels of insecurity are also linked to concerns about human rights violations. We encourage the Malian authorities to continue to cooperate with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to enable the Mission to conduct investigations into alleged incidents of human rights violations where necessary.

The dire security situation in Mali reinforces the importance of adapting regional tools for response and forging a harmonized, multi-dimensional approach to dealing with the multiple crises. We underscore the need for a more holistic approach, as envisaged in the ongoing work of the United Nations-AU-ECOWAS joint assessment in the Sahel. We look forward to an outcome of the joint assessment that can leverage the best elements of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Accra Initiative, the Nouakchott process and the Multinational Joint Task Force in responding robustly to the growing incidence of terrorism in the Sahel, including in Mali.

The A3 also believes that the continuing presence of MINUSMA is an important stabilization factor in Mali. We salute the personnel who continue to sacrifice their lives to the cause of peace in Mali and pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The A3 unreservedly condemns yesterday's attacks on MINUSMA in Tessalit, as well as all attacks on its personnel, and calls for swift investigations to ensure the prosecution of the perpetrators, given the fact that such acts constitute a violation of international law and international human rights law.

If we are to ensure that MINUSMA's presence has a greater impact on the situation in Mali, urgent steps need to be taken to address the myriad of challenges facing the Mission, including disinformation campaigns against it and restrictions on its movement, including in the air space, which are affecting the Mission's response to early-warning alerts. The A3 believes that the strategic review of MINUSMA, which is expected in January 2023, will provide some comprehensive and forward-looking recommendations that can make the Mission more responsive to the evolving nature of conflicts in Mali. We believe the Mission could benefit from stronger support in troop contribution and capacity-building on counter-terrorism measures, as well as the provision of adequate logistics, including airlift assets. It is also important for the Malian authorities to adhere to the status of forces agreement that they have committed to, and that should be done in a manner that enhances the coherence of objectives and actions for lasting peace in Mali. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali is equally important.

In a related development, we are concerned about the continuing detention in Mali since July of 46 Ivorian soldiers who we are told were deployed in support of a MINUSMA contingent. While the A3 welcomes the Malian authorities' commitment to resolving the challenge, we appeal for an acceleration of the resolution of the matter. We support the Secretary-General's call for all efforts to be made in building trust and cooperation between Mali and its neighbours and international partners.

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

Addressing the root causes of instability in Mali, as well as aggravating factors such as climate change and the coronavirus disease pandemic, is essential. We urge the elevation of the role of women and youth towards the sustenance of peace and development, including through the Peacebuilding Commission's initiatives targeting youth, women and agricultural self-employment, as well as the strengthening of measures to empower and enhance their full and meaningful participation in all political processes. 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 encouraged.

The A3 is alarmed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which is evidenced by the more than 1.8 million people facing severe food insecurity, with 2 million children under age five being affected by acute malnutrition. We therefore reiterate the Secretary-General's call for the international community to step up its funding support to help realize the \$686 million humanitarian response plan required for Mali in 2022.

In conclusion, the A3 believes that strong political will and cooperation by the Malian authorities, together with deeper cooperation with regional actors and a united Council, is required to address the situation in Mali and bring lasting peace to our brotherly country.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, for his briefing on the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the situation in the country. We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, in today's meeting.

We express our condolences to the troop-contributing countries, whose peacekeepers continue to suffer casualties in the discharge of their duties. We also express our condolences to the Government of Mali in connection with the casualties among civilians and military personnel as a result of their fight against terrorist threats.

We concur with the assessments contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/731) that the situation in Mali is becoming more stable in nature. Thanks to the deployment of a sociopolitical dialogue with the proactive participation of the transitional authorities and signatory groups, the process of Government reforms has accelerated, with considerable momentum generated for the implementation of the provisions of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Parameters for the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for 2023–2024 have also been agreed upon.

In recent months, important documents have been adopted regarding the restoration of State institutions, while the work of advisory platforms for elections preparations and political and institutional reforms

has resumed. In September and October, after a year-long hiatus, meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee were held. On 11 October, a specially created commission submitted a new draft constitution for approval by the Head of State.

The country continues to wage a relentless and difficult war against terrorism. Owing to the security vacuum linked to the unprovoked withdrawal of French and European Union units from the territory of Mali, there has been a significant uptick in terrorist activity, including by groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and the Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin. Despite objective difficulties, in recent months, the Malian armed forces have demonstrated that they are capable of achieving significant results in the fight against terrorists and militants.

The Russian Federation has been providing the Malian army with comprehensive assistance, including through military capacity-building and training for military personnel. We also pay tribute to MINUSMA, which has been helping the Malian military with casualty evacuations and rebuilding critical infrastructure.

We firmly believe that ensuring an adequate level of security is key to ensuring the success of credible democratic elections in the country. We are satisfied that progress has been made in the dialogue with the transitional authorities on resolving the issue of MINUSMA troop rotation. The Malian authorities should certainly be aware of any such movements of peacekeepers.

We regret that a number of countries have decided to abandon or suspend their participation in MINUSMA. The reasons for that, as well as other challenges facing the blue helmets, should be scrupulously analysed during the Mission's strategic review, the results of which are expected by January 2023.

The Russian Federation welcomes the agreement reached in July between Mali and the Economic Community of West African States, which made it possible to lift the bulk of regional sanctions imposed on the country. However, at the same time, we are deeply concerned by attempts to turn the Sahel into an arena for geopolitical confrontation, which is completely alien to the region and runs counter to the national interests of its States and peoples. In particular, internal disagreements among the Group of Five for the Sahel, provoked by external influence, compelled Mali to leave the association, jeopardizing its future

activities. The artificial crises fomented externally in the relations between the States of West Africa attest to the fact that Western neocolonialism is attempting to maintain its influence over the continent and poses a very real threat to it.

The starkly negative reaction of the West to the strengthening of Russian-Mali cooperation is yet another manifestation of paternalistic attitudes and double standards on the part of the former colonial Powers. Lies about so-called Russian mercenaries are being spread by those who have spent not just years but decades sending their own soldiers of fortune to the continent in order to topple undesirable regimes and establish control over its natural resources. I will not even mention the fact that those countries are directly responsible for the destabilization of the Sahel, which occurred as a result of the invasion of Libya in 2011.

We have heard and continue to hear attempts to tarnish the nature of our assistance to Mali. There have been vile insinuations trotted out on the subject of human rights violations. In that connection, we support Bamako's commitment to the conduct of all necessary investigations in that area.

I would underscore that, unlike some of our Western colleagues, the Russian Federation does not attempt to interfere in Mali's politics, nor does it attempt to impose conditions for the provision of assistance that could undermine its national sovereignty. The bedrock of our relations is long-standing and equal bilateral cooperation, as well as an understanding of our common goal to combat the global scourge of terrorism. In that regard, it should come as no surprise that we have not received any complaints from our African partners in relation to the parameters of our cooperation. We call on our Western colleagues to stop abusing the Security Council's platform and to respect the Malian people, their choices and their efforts to resolve the situation in their country.

In conclusion, we would note that, given the current difficult situation, it is necessary to effectively assist the Malian authorities while encouraging them to pursue balanced and calibrated policies in order to resolve crises in the country. We therefore call on our Western colleagues to follow suit, as we stand ready to cooperate closely with them in efforts aimed at the swift normalization of the situation in Mali and achieving lasting peace and stability throughout the Sahelo-Saharan region.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mr. Wane, for his briefing and welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Mr. Diop.

Circumstances oblige me, as those who spoke before me, to begin by expressing my sadness at the death of four blue helmets. Mexico expresses its condolences to the families of the soldiers who died recently in Tessalit, as well as to the Chadian authorities. The increasing number of incidents involving improvised explosive devices and the persistence of illicit trafficking in small arms remain a source of great concern. This unfortunate incident again demonstrates the need to strengthen measures to prevent weapons and materials for making explosives from getting into the hands of the extremist groups operating in Mali and the Sahel. I will now address two issues.

First, we welcome the progress made by the Malian authorities in strengthening the political transition by enacting an electoral law and establishing an independent authority for election management, among other things. We are aware of the extent of the reform agenda, including the adoption of a new constitution, that the Government has set as its goal for the transition period. We therefore urge the authorities to take a tactical approach to their reforms so that they can ensure that the elections are held on time and that the State's authority is established throughout the country. It is essential to ensure that progress is made in the electoral preparations, in dialogue with all political actors, and that the conditions established by the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union are respected, particularly considering Mali's obligations as a State party to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

In addition, the transition must be accompanied by concrete steps to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We therefore congratulate the Malian authorities on resuming the meetings on its implementation and also recognize the role played by the international mediation team, led by Algeria. We trust that the necessary steps will be taken to implement the commitments made at recent meetings. We believe that progress on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is particularly urgent.

Secondly, we believe it is time to take decisions on the best way to support the stabilization of Mali. The

recent reports of the Secretary-General clearly show that the transformation of Mali's security architecture and the new political and military strategy of the national authorities have brought with them significant challenges for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We hope that the strategic review of the Mission will provide concrete and relevant elements aimed at rethinking MINUSMA's mandate and objectives. It will be important to consider all the options with an open mind. At the same time, we call for the review to be carried out in coordination with the High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel led by Mahamadou Issoufou, former President of the Niger.

We firmly believe that a stable Mali is fundamental if peace is to take root in the Sahel. The decisions on the future of MINUSMA must therefore also take into account the regional context and the perspectives of the High-level Panel on issues such as cross-border cooperation and the future of the Group of Five for the Sahel. And in order to achieve lasting peace in Mali, we believe the structural causes of the conflicts must be addressed. In that regard, it will be essential to improve governance, combat inequalities and bring justice to the victims of the conflict. The constant dangers faced by peacekeepers, together with the persisting attacks on civilians and the many cases of human rights abuses and violations, are irrefutable evidence that Mali still requires the support of the international community to achieve peace, and the Security Council must try to continue to do its part.

Ms. Dautlari (Albania): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for briefing us today, and I welcome the Foreign Minister of Mali to this meeting.

At the outset, we would like to express our condolences on the deaths of four Chadian peacekeepers yesterday and wish the wounded a speedy recovery. We commend the peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), who are operating in extremely dangerous conditions, and I want to stress my country's full support to the Mission. Allow me to make three brief points.

First, we remain deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian and security situation in Mali. The recent attacks in the northern regions of Ménaka and Gao perpetrated by terrorists and armed groups have

killed hundreds and displaced tens of thousands of civilians. We urge the Malian authorities to strengthen their cross-border cooperation in order to restore State authority throughout the country. Human rights violations and abuses against civilians have continued to be committed by military forces, the Wagner Group and armed groups. Albania strongly condemns the use of mercenaries operating in violation of international law and perpetrating indiscriminate attacks on civilians. We urge the Malian authorities to investigate all allegations and hold the perpetrators to account.

Secondly, we note that some positive steps have been taken. We welcome the transitional calendar agreement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore constitutional order in Mali by February 2024, and the enactment of the new electoral law is a step closer to that goal. We emphasize the importance of facilitating the meaningful representation and inclusion of civil society, women and youth groups. We also welcome the holding of the first meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee since October 2021. We urge sustained momentum in monitoring the peace process and building consensus among the parties. However, overall, we regret that the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali has been sidelined. We must not forget that it is still the best framework for addressing the root causes of the conflict in northern Mali and ultimately resolving it. Albania calls for a renewed commitment to the agreement in order to address the growing insecurity and the structural causes of instability.

Thirdly, we are deeply disturbed that MINUSMA continues to face restrictions on its movement and access, contrary to its mandate from the Security Council. Albania welcomes the Secretary-General's strategic assessment of the Mission currently under way. We expect the review to provide clear insight into how the Mission can better adapt to deal with the current challenges and operate effectively on the ground. In that regard, we condemn the continued detention of the Ivorian soldiers sent to support MINUSMA, and we urge the authorities to reach consensus with ECOWAS on their release.

In conclusion, the situation in Mali remains complex. That is why we think the unity of the Council on this issue is crucial.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Wane for

his insights and leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and for the hard work of his team in the toughest of circumstances. I join others in expressing our deepest condolences following the deaths of the four Chadian peacekeepers in Kidal. I also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Diop in our meeting and express our condolences to him for the civilian and military losses on the Malian side.

When the Council met to discuss Mali in June (see S/PV.9061 and S/PV.9082), we encouraged the transitional authorities to continue engaging with the Economic Community of West African States on an election timetable. Since then, agreement has been reached, sanctions have been lifted and some positive steps have been made towards the holding of elections. The Agreement Monitoring Committee also met for the first time in more than a year. As those endeavours move forward, we hope that the authorities will ensure inclusive processes, particularly for women and young people, while promoting dialogue.

We understand that the Malian authorities are dealing with multiple challenges. Al-Qaida- and Islamic-State-affiliated groups continue to expand their territory, preying on communities and attacking military bases. The 40 per cent increase in cases of conflict-related sexual violence reported by the Secretary-General is a shocking illustration of just how urgent it is to improve human rights protection.

But the terror imposed by those groups must not be countered with a military response that fails to protect civilians and their human rights. In August, the United Nations Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali reported violations committed by Malian forces alongside “foreign military personnel described as Russian military officials”. The malign presence of the Wagner Group can no longer be ignored or denied.

All perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations must be held accountable. Without accountability and justice, trust cannot be rebuilt and grievances will endure. MINUSMA must be granted unrestricted access to investigate human rights allegations independently. Mali’s statement in June that the authorities would not guarantee the Mission’s freedom to achieve that was deeply concerning, and it is part of a pattern of actions and statements that call into question Mali’s commitment

to full partnership with MINUSMA. We urge the authorities to work constructively with the Mission, while lifting restrictions and facilitating the vital work of peacekeepers.

The United Kingdom remains a strong supporter of MINUSMA and its mission. The Organization’s forthcoming review will need to answer some fundamental questions, including whether and how the Mission can maintain a viable presence in Mali. The review should present credible options that realities on the ground. We look forward to engaging with colleagues on that in the coming weeks.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Mali warmly congratulates you, Mr. President, on the accession of your country, Gabon, a great friend of Mali, to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October, and assures you of our full readiness to work alongside you for the success of your tenure. I also wish to greet and thank all the members of the Council for their kind words to me and my country.

Yesterday a cowardly terrorist attack using an improvised explosive device cost the lives of four Chadian peacekeepers and injured three others. On behalf of the Government and the people of Mali, I extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims, to the Government and the people of Chad and to the United Nations, and we wish a speedy recovery to the injured. We condemn without reservation this barbaric act, which only strengthens our common determination to continue the fight against terrorism. I also pay tribute here to the thousands of Malian soldier and civilian victims who continue to bear the heavy toll of the insecurity there for over a decade.

The Government of Mali takes note of the report of the Secretary-General under review (S/2022/731), and I thank my brother Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his briefing and the updates since its publication.

The Government’s detailed observations have been communicated to the members of the Security Council in a memorandum. I would now like to respond to a

few passages in the report and to the comments voiced today, which I listened to very attentively.

On the political front, significant progress was made during the period under review towards a peaceful and secure return to constitutional order. All actions were carried out in close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), our subregional organization. Indeed, the Government adopted a timetable for political and electoral reforms, including the electoral calendar, within the framework of the new electoral law adopted by consensus in the National Transition Council. The new electoral law includes the creation and establishment of the Independent Authority for Election Management, whose 15 members were appointed on 12 October. The United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS participate in all the meetings of the Commission for the Monitoring of the Timetable for Political and Institutional Reforms, the most recent of which was held on 13 October under the chairmanship of the interim Prime Minister. Pursuing this dynamic of inclusiveness and consensus that is dear to His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goïta, President of the transitional Government and Head of State of Mali, arrangements are under way to increase the number of seats in the National Transition Council, the legislative organ of the transition.

Those measures are part of a vast reform project currently under way and are essential to the rebuilding of our State, which includes the submission, on 11 October, to the President of the transition of the preliminary draft of the new Malian constitution, drawn up following a consensual and broadly consultative process. This fundamental draft legislation takes into account the deep aspirations of Malians expressed during the national dialogue on the reform process.

With regard to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting from the Algiers process, the Government remains fully committed to its diligent and sensible implementation for lasting stability in Mali. In that regard, I welcome the holding of the high-level decision-making meeting in August, followed by the sixth high-level meeting of the follow-up committee on 2 September, in Bamako, which made it possible to overcome certain obstacles to its implementation.

More recently, the forty-sixth session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, held on 11 October, enabled the Malian parties to renew their commitments

to lasting peace. In that regard, I would like to commend the strong involvement of the international mediation, under the leadership of Algeria, and I thank all international mediators for their support. As the Council is aware, under the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the Malian parties have agreed to integrate 26,000 ex-combatants by 2024.

I also welcome the increasingly active and significant participation of women and youth in the peace process. The Government of Mali is working continuously to promote peace and coexistence, as demonstrated by the first national reconciliation week, held last month throughout the country and in the diaspora.

Like the Secretary-General, many have expressed their concern about the security situation. I note well the concerns expressed around this table, many of which I share. The report under review, however, would have been more objective if it had provided more information on the efforts and progress made by the Government to secure the national territory and protect the civilian population.

Since December 2021, the Malian Defence and Security Forces have launched large-scale military operations that destroyed major terrorist sanctuaries, seized significant amounts of weapons and military equipment, liberated several areas and facilitated the return of displaced persons to their homes. That increase in the strength of the Defence and Security Forces is a concrete achievement that is greatly welcomed by the population. The Government remains determined to prevent and counter indiscriminate attacks and reprisals against the civilian population.

In addition, as many speakers mentioned, the Government adopted an integrated strategy for the centre of the country, which, as well as the purely security aspects, includes political and economic, social and cultural development approaches. That is to say that the Malian authorities are fully aware that a security response alone will not be enough to restore peace and stability in our country and that it is essential to create a socioeconomic environment that can provide opportunities and prospects for the population, in particular sectors that are vulnerable to the harmful influences of terrorist groups.

In the same vein, the Government is fully committed to restoring State authority and providing basic social services to people in areas affected by insecurity. With

regard to the presence of State authorities, measures have been taken to ensure that the recently appointed officials, of whom there are many — nearly 200 State officials were recently appointed — are ready to be deployed following their training, which includes modules on elections and the MINUSMA mandate, as well as basic social services. In that regard, public initiatives for the provision of education to as many children as possible in conflict-affected areas are being stepped up. It is also a significant priority of the Government to make huge efforts to enable all children, even those in displaced persons camps, to receive a decent education.

Still on the topic of security, it is surprising that, in the context of the factual account, the Secretary-General's report did not mention Mali's appeal to the Security Council on 15 August with regard to destabilization attempts and the repeated violations of its airspace by French forces (see S/2022/622). As Council members know, those extremely serious acts of aggression constitute a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We believe that such acts must not go unchallenged, and the Security Council is strongly called upon to act in Mali and elsewhere in Africa. That is why the Government reiterates its request for a specific meeting of the Security Council, which will give it the opportunity to present concrete evidence of France's duplicity, espionage and destabilization against Mali, including the sharing of intelligence and the dropping of military equipment to criminal organizations, which are the source of insecurity and violence against our civilian populations, who expect the Security Council to assume its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

We have also called for national and international public opinion to be informed for once about the root causes and drivers of insecurity, destabilization and the spread of terrorism in the Sahel. Mali denounces the proxy war being waged against it, as well as the attempts to prevent the holding of a specific meeting, which will reveal the truth about what is happening in that part of the Sahel. In any case, the Government of Mali reserves the right to resort to self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and with letter No. 444/Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, dated 15 August 2022, from the Government of Mali to the Security Council. Mali therefore reserves the right to self-

defence if France continues to undermine our country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security.

On the issue of human rights, I welcome the decline in the number of cases of human rights violations during the reporting period. However, contrary to unfounded and deliberate allegations, the military operations of the Malian Defence and Security Forces are conducted in strict compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law.

In accordance with its policy of zero tolerance, the Government of Mali, through the military justice system, has tried several cases of offences that fall within the jurisdiction of the military courts, and numerous legal proceedings have been opened in that regard, some of which are currently being investigated by the military tribunal. In addition to those measures, investigations were launched in pursuit of the truth, and the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Code of Military Justice are being revised to deal with the situation.

I welcome the support of MINUSMA in the holding of the second hearing of the Military Tribunal of Mopti and three other hearings in the Douentza jurisdiction, as well as its contribution to improving detention and security conditions in some prisons in the centre of the country.

I must also say that justice has its own requirements, which demand that the allegations contained in the report, which are not gospel, be supported by objective evidence or, at least, that they be substantiated in principle, which is not always the case in the report. However, I emphatically reiterate that the Government of Mali remains firmly opposed to the manipulation and politicization of the issue of human rights for the purposes of destabilization, intimidation and blackmail.

It is also regrettable that some United Nations mechanisms, which were supposedly set up to help countries in crisis, are subject to the same manipulation by external interests. In that regard, the Government of Mali notes with regret that the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), concerning Mali, is increasingly overstepping its mandate in terms of both the substance of the issues to be considered and its area of operation, which is limited solely to the northern regions of our country covered in the implementation of the Agreement. The Government has always cooperated in good faith with the mechanisms relating to the sanctions regime, in

particular the Committee, with which we have a good relationship. However, we are considering re-evaluating our cooperation with the Panel of Experts in the light of its compliance with the exact terms of its mandate. We wrote to the Security Council with regard to that matter.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the Government of Mali remains very concerned about the precarious situation of Malian refugees in neighbouring countries, whom I would like to thank for their hospitality towards our people. The Government also remains attentive to the case of our thousands of internally displaced persons, including their children, in the context of the start of the school year. We are all the more concerned that, as the Special Representative mentioned earlier, only 30 per cent of the funds required for humanitarian needs have been raised. However, I want to assure our compatriots in that difficult situation that the Government of Mali will continue to work to create the conditions not only for their adequate care on the ground but also, above all, to facilitate their safe and, in particular, dignified return to their places of origin.

I have also taken note of Council members' remarks and observations on the operational challenges facing MINUSMA. The Government of Mali has made arrangements to take over after the departure of the French Barkhane force, so there is no security vacuum in this regard. We therefore invite MINUSMA to cooperate fully with us, with a view to making our joint actions on the ground more effective.

Accordingly, I would like Council members to understand that, contrary to what has been communicated to them, we have no desire to restrict the Mission's movements. Rather, the Government of Mali desires to assert Malian sovereignty over the country's territory and to coordinate and work in partnership with the Mission, taking into account the new context.

The Government has been led to take measures essentially for national security reasons, following the arrival, without a legal basis, of foreign forces presenting themselves under the banner of the United Nations, which is deeply worrying. This should be of concern to the Council. The suspension of rotations that followed was only temporary; it was immediately lifted, as the Special Representative mentioned, following the establishment of a permanent high-level consultation framework between the Malian Government and MINUSMA, which includes no less than seven members

of the Government, which shows our commitment to working with the Mission to find solutions. The framework has made it possible to resolve rotation issues, and, as the framework is permanent, it will also make it possible to find solutions to other difficulties for MINUSMA that may arise. In any case, we will always be available to consider solutions together.

With a view to preparing the strategic review, the Government of Mali has made it a priority to refocus the Mission on the foundations of its presence in Mali, in particular supporting the restoration of State authority throughout the country and better coordinating the Mission's work with the Malian authorities.

I understand that, with regard to MINUSMA's work, the representative of France believes that there is greater appreciation for MINUSMA in the remote regions of our country. I would like to remind him of Mali's motto: "One people, one faith". There is no region where Malians from the north and Malians from the south are content to oppose each other. But I do believe that the feelings that Malians are expressing towards the Mission in the interior of the country have no other purpose than to encourage the Mission to fully assume its mandate, which is to restore State authority over all of the Malian territory. And I reiterate once again that Mali is fully committed to cooperating with the Mission in fulfilling its mandate and in respect of the sovereignty of our country.

Some members of the Council have also raised the issue of the illegal and unauthorized arrival of heavily armed troops from Côte d'Ivoire. It has given rise to comments around this table and even outside this room. I note with regret that the report of the Secretary-General unfortunately fails once again to refer to the note verbale contained in document MINUSMA/PROT/NV/226/2022, dated 22 July 2022, by which MINUSMA itself once again established that there is clearly no link between the Mission and the 49 soldiers who arrived on Malian territory. I repeat this for the representatives of Norway, the A3 and Albania. I believe that on 12 July the spokesperson for the Secretary-General also stated very clearly that there is no link, emphasizing this point.

I believe that it should be very clear in the minds of the members of the Council that these were not United Nations troops. All United Nations troops that arrive in Mali and follow the protocol are approved and facilitated. Even during the incident yesterday, authorization was given within a few hours for the

evacuation of soldiers. I think therefore we should not confuse the issues.

The Malian justice system is seized of this case, which does not concern the United Nations. But despite the dysfunctions and shortcomings that have been recognized by both the United Nations and Côte d'Ivoire, the Government of Mali has always said it was open to a political and diplomatic solution, in particular through the mediation of the President of the Togolese Republic, in the spirit of the fraternal and neighbourly relations that have always existed between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. We are, above all, brotherly countries. This mediation has already led to the release, on humanitarian grounds, of three female soldiers.

In order to give the diplomatic process every chance to succeed, however, Mali calls on the various parties involved to avoid any bias and to take a constructive approach towards finding a solution. This is what is expected of our partners, but it is also what is expected of the United Nations.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the Malian people have decided to take their own destiny in hand. The Malian people fully support the transition Government in the political and institutional reforms under way, in the efforts and actions being undertaken to secure our national territory, in the protection of people and property, and in the provision of basic social services to the population. To reinforce this unconditional support, the Government is working to organize general, transparent and credible elections that will mark the end of the transitional period in March 2024, followed by the peaceful transfer of power to the new elected authorities.

The Malian people as a whole appreciate the support and assistance from all of our partners — I will say it again, all of our partners — in carrying out major projects for the future of our country. In this respect, I would like to recall the key principles laid down by His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goïta, President of the Transition and Head of State, which guide public action in Mali. It is important to reiterate these principles because they will guide our interaction with the Council as well as with other partners, namely: first, respect for Mali's sovereignty; secondly, respect for the strategic choices and partners selected by Mali; and third, the taking into account of the vital interests of the Malian people in all decisions that will be taken.

I conclude by reiterating the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali for the constant support of the United Nations and all the partners who have lent a hand in my country. I pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of the Malian crisis — both civilian and military, Malian and foreign — who have lost their lives in Mali.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of France has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to set the record straight after the false and defamatory accusations made by the Malian transition Government in the annex to the letter transmitted to the Security Council on 15 August (S/2022/622) and repeated just now in the Council by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali.

I would recall that the redeployment of Operation Barkhane outside Malian territory ended on 15 August with the departure from Mali of the last French soldier. The communiqué issued on this occasion by the Presidency of the French Republic has been transmitted to the members of the Security Council (S/2022/625, annex). This redeployment manoeuvre was decided on 17 February following in-depth consultations with all partners involved in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. It was based on the observation that the political and operational conditions for its continued engagement in Mali were no longer in place.

France had reported on that to the Council. We have always been transparent with the international community since our military intervention in Mali in 2013 — an intervention that was based on a request from the Malian authorities.

In that context, I deeply regret the serious and unfounded accusations that the Malian transition authorities have repeatedly made against France. I would like to remind the Council that France has been committed to Mali for nine years — at the request of the country — to combat armed terrorist groups, and 59 French soldiers have paid with their lives in that fight.

France has never violated Malian airspace. I formally condemn any violation of the bilateral legal framework. France complies with the requirements of the agreement concluded by the exchange of letters in 2013, despite Mali's unilateral and unjustified rejection of it on 2 May. France will remain committed in the

Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea and the Lake Chad region, alongside all responsible States that choose to combat terrorism and respect stability and coexistence among communities. We will continue to combat terrorism in coordination with all our partners. We will also continue to support civilian populations, who are the main victims of terrorism.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I very much apologize for taking the floor, as I thought the meeting was over. I am not going to go into detail to respond to the statements that were made by the Representative of France. However, I believe that the fact that he made a further statement demonstrates that the Security Council, as requested by Mali, should call a meeting

in which we can make our own points in that regard, because we did not have the chance to do so today.

I hope that now that France has begun to address the issue, it will agree to convening such a meeting as soon as possible. The Malian State will bring to the Council and the world concrete and tangible proof of what we are putting forward. Mali's credibility is at stake, and we do not make these statements lightly. We know that we are talking about extremely serious acts and that our statements put at stake the accountability and credibility of the Malian State. I therefore hope that France will now be the one to request such a special meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.