



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 5 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that France intends to take advantage of its presidency of the Security Council for the month of December 2013 to include among the issues for discussion the combating of drug trafficking and its consequences for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

The Security Council will hold a meeting on that subject, in the form of a public briefing, on 18 December 2013.

With this meeting in mind, France has prepared a concept paper (see annex). I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Gérard Araud



## **Annex to the letter dated 5 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: English and French]

### **Concept note**

#### **Combating drug trafficking in the Sahel and in West Africa: Public briefing of the Security Council during the French Presidency 18 December 2013**

During its presidency of the Security Council, France will hold a public briefing on 18 December on combating drug trafficking in the Sahel and in West Africa.

#### **Background**

**1. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,<sup>a</sup> 18 tons of cocaine, amounting to \$1.25 billion** (sales value at destination), transited through West Africa in 2010. A growing portion of drugs entering via West African coasts, by sea or air, uses the Sahel route, crossing the Sahara, by land or air, to the Mediterranean coasts. The modes of conveyance to West Africa are wide-ranging (sea shipments and containerized sea shipments, private planes, air couriers, mail). The subregion has therefore become a hub for the trafficking of hard drugs (cocaine and heroin) in addition to being a place where cannabis trafficking persists and synthetic drugs have emerged. Being a transit zone, the subregion has also become an area of consumption (1.1 million people<sup>b</sup>) and production of synthetic drugs for Europe, the Middle East and East Asia. These types of trafficking are moving according to the pressure that is exerted in different places by national authorities and the international community, which makes a joint approach indispensable.

**2. Drug trafficking, the most lucrative of all types of trafficking globally, is a source of destabilization of countries.** It is often linked to other forms of organized crime — trafficking in arms and human beings, corruption and money-laundering — which corrode other institutions — justice, army, customs or police — and the legitimate economy. Violence that occurs between criminal groups, in efforts to capture markets, weakens governance, hinders development and fosters radicalization, as could be seen in the crisis in Mali. The emergence of West African criminal networks organizing the transit, or even the production and consumption, of drugs, worsens this destabilizing impact. Cocaine and cannabis trafficking enables extremists to generate income, which in turn finances rebellions. Lastly, local drug consumption is having an increasing number of health, economic and social consequences for the populations.

**3. Drug trafficking has developed in the subregion** owing to the breadth of scarcely populated border areas, making tight control unrealistic, and a lack of capacity in three areas: border area management; the coherence of the justice system at the national and transnational levels; and the repression of illicit financial flows.

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<sup>a</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “Transnational Organized Crime in West Africa: A Threat Assessment”, Vienna, February 2013.

<sup>b</sup> UNODC, *World Drug Report 2012*.

Measures to combat money-laundering remain inadequate, however they are an essential component in the fight against drug trafficking.

**4. To address these challenges, countries in the region have made efforts to better coordinate their actions to combat drug trafficking.** In 2008, in Praia, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a regional action plan with the support of UNODC, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the European Union, in order to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug consumption in West Africa. This action plan was extended in 2013. ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission met on 24 and 25 June 2013 to enhance their cooperation in the area of maritime security. The African Union also adopted a Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017). Lastly, the fight against cross-cutting threats will be on the agenda of the Elysée Summit for Peace and Security in Africa, to be held in Paris on 6 and 7 December 2013.

**5. The following regional initiatives benefit from United Nations support:**

- **With regard to the destabilizing impact of drug trafficking, the Security Council has assumed its responsibility and has addressed the issue,** by adopting presidential statements at the end of specific debates.<sup>c</sup> In 2009, the Security Council held a session on drugs for the first time, under the “Peace and Security in West Africa” agenda, in order to alert the international community to the threats posed by drug trafficking to peace and security. A number of debates followed, particularly in 2010, during the French presidency, on cross-cutting threats to international peace and security, and in 2012, during the Togolese presidency, on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace and stability in West Africa and in the Sahel. In accordance with the presidential statement that was adopted at that time ([S/PRST/2012/2](#)), the Secretary-General issued, in June 2013, his report<sup>d</sup> on transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel, which the Security Council has not yet studied. Lastly, the Security Council, in its resolution [2056 \(2012\)](#), sought the implementation of a United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which it endorsed in July 2013.<sup>e</sup> The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa was entrusted with its implementation. Its first two components concern governance and cross-cutting threats.

The Security Council also took account of these threats in the definition of the mandates of missions in West Africa, by including the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking as well as border management in the mandates of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS); the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL); UNOWA; the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), until 2012; and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), until 2011.

<sup>c</sup> S/PRST/2009/20 of 10 July 2009, S/PRST/2009/32 of 8 December 2009, S/PRST/2010/4 of 24 February 2010 and S/PRST/2012/2 of 21 February 2012.

<sup>d</sup> S/2013/359.

<sup>e</sup> S/PRST/2013/10 of 16 July 2013 on peace and security in Africa.

- **Several initiatives were implemented by UNODC, in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNOWA, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization,** in order to support the Action Plan of ECOWAS: the West Africa Coast Initiative, which created transnational crime units to facilitate the collection, sharing and use of information, inter-administration cooperation and joint cross-border operations in the five member countries; the joint airport interdiction task force (AIRCOP); the Container Control Programme; strengthening anti-money-laundering/combating the financing of terrorism systems; and the Judicial Regional Platform of the Sahel countries. The programmes help governments to establish legislation, structures, specialized staff and best practices to combat drug trafficking.

### **Objective**

The meeting aims to:

- Reiterate the Council's commitment to addressing the destabilizing effect of drug trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel;
- Commend and encourage regional and subregional initiatives;
- Encourage the adoption of operational measures to enhance regional cooperation to combat drug trafficking, with the support of the United Nations and of other competent international and regional organizations. These measures would be implemented, within the area of competence of the Security Council, to round out the work of other bodies (General Assembly, Economic and Social Council).

Four concrete areas could be addressed during the meeting:

- Enhancing regional cooperation in maritime, terrestrial and air border control;
- Judicial cooperation and strengthening of the penal system to fight impunity for traffickers;
- Anti-money-laundering and improving seizures and confiscations of criminal assets, notably through the revitalization of the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa and monitoring the Financial Action Task Force recommendations that it supports;
- Improving synergies between UNODC, the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and special political missions and peacekeeping operations, particularly as part of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. This involves the provision of better information to the Security Council on drug trafficking and transnational organized crime and the threats they pose to peace and security in West Africa, particularly by bolstering the connection between the work done by UNODC and by the Security Council. The United Nations system task force on transnational organized crime and drug trafficking, co-chaired by UNODC and the Department of Political Affairs, which links United Nations agencies and the competent authorities, could be mobilized.

**Speakers**

The public briefing will be introduced by the Secretary-General, with the participation of the Executive Director of UNODC, Yury Fedotov, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Said Djinnit, and representatives of regional organizations.

**Final document**

The public briefing on 18 December could lead to the adoption of a presidential statement.

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