



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 17 January 2019 from the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council**

We have the honour to transmit herewith the summary of the joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel, held on 13 November 2018.

The meeting built on previous joint meetings of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016) and on the situation in the Sahel (2017). It also responded to the increased interest among Member States in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in the Sahel through the promotion of United Nations system coherence. To this end, the meeting raised awareness of the possible implications of climate change on stability in the Sahel and showcased emerging mitigation and adaptation measures to address climate change effects and for sustaining peace. There was also a deliberation on ways to enhance coherence, cooperation and coordination in strengthening the resilience of the countries of the Sahel to climate change.

We kindly ask you to circulate the present letter and the attached summary (see annex) to Security Council members as a document of the Council.

*(Signed)* Inga Rhonda **King**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
President of the Economic and Social Council

*(Signed)* Ion **Jinga**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission



**Annex to the letter dated 17 January 2019 from the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**Joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission**

**Linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel**

**13 November 2018**

**Informal summary**

The President of the Economic and Social Council, Inga Rhonda King, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ion Jinga, co-chaired a joint meeting of the Council and the Commission on linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel. Member States from both intergovernmental bodies and from the Sahel region and civil society attended the joint meeting. The gathering was timely, given that it followed the annual session of the Commission on the Sahel, held on 12 November 2018. The event built on previous joint meetings on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016) and on the situation in the Sahel. (2017), as well as on relevant Security Council meetings. The joint meeting also responded to the increased interest among Member States in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in the Sahel. To that end, the meeting raised awareness of the possible adverse effects of climate change on the stability in the Sahel; showcased mitigation and addressed adaptation measures regarding the linkages between climate change and the challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel; and deliberated on ways to enhance coherence, cooperation and coordination in strengthening the resilience of the countries of the Sahel to climate change.

**Effects of climate change**

In her opening remarks, Ms. King outlined the complex and multidimensional challenges facing the agriculture-dependent Sahel region, aggravated by the adverse effects of climate change. Mr. Jinga affirmed the opportunities available for the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission to support effective mitigation and adaptation measures to meet the challenges and help to address the impact of climate change on development and stability in the Sahel.

In his keynote address, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Ibrahim Thiaw, underscored that climate change was a threat multiplier, putting additional stress on current political, social and economic pressure points that contributed to the problem. He highlighted that the Sahel was the region with the most significant number of people disproportionately affected by global warming, having suffered from severe episodes of drought and desertification in the past 50 years. Related studies had also clearly demonstrated a direct correlation between years of drought and a significant economic downturn in a region largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture and extensive pastoralism. Climate change and the related shrinking of natural resources, including land and water, had a disproportionate effect on those vulnerable, as the struggle for livelihoods and growing food insecurity led to population displacement, migration and intercommunal violence, including between farmers and pastoralists. He also noted that, with the changing demographics, coupled

with a scarcity of resources due to climate change, more conflicts in the region could be expected owing to a growing competition over access to land and water, fuelling further internal and international migration. The weak institutional capacities in the Sahel region to prevent or settle these conflicts increased the severe risk of escalation to ethnic or even religious conflicts.

A number of delegations echoed the view that, in the Sahel, climate change could exacerbate tensions and potentially lead to social unrest and conflict. Some speakers disagreed and were of the opinion that associating climate change with the dependency between sustainable development and peace could give way to a wrong assumption that environmental distress naturally led to conflict. A number of Member States called for stronger analytical work to better understand how climate change interacted with security risks and to identify eventual effective response strategies and action. Member States noted that the Sahel was the region of the world where the links between climate change, peace, security and development were most apparent, and needed the support of the international community. Several speakers highlighted the high conflict risks generated by declining economic activities, lack of employment opportunities, in particular among young people, persistent humanitarian crises and displacement. They also said that the erosion of resilience and social values were also making young people easy prey for terrorism and extremism. Young people and women who constituted a large part of the agricultural labour force in the Sahel carried the most onerous burden of the adverse effects of climate change and related challenges. In the discussion, the humanitarian costs of the situation were also highlighted, with Ms. King noting that 24 million people required humanitarian assistance throughout the region.

### **Sahel as a land of opportunity**

Member States stressed that the Sahel was as much a land of challenges as of opportunities. Mr. Thiaw presented his vision for the operationalization of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the Support Plan for the Sahel to address the challenges posed by climate change. This vision included upscaling climate-resilient agriculture and renewable energy for development initiatives by harnessing the abundant renewable sources of energy in the Sahel to achieve relevant Sustainable Development Goals. The ambition of the Support Plan was to leverage technological and financial support to bring electric power to the rural economy; reduce food loss; promote the processing and transformation of local products; and create value chains and jobs, thus reducing irregular migration and its negative results. The need to place farmers' cooperatives and women and young entrepreneurs at the heart of the efforts to address food insecurity and socioeconomic decline and reduce vulnerability in the region is stressed in the Support Plan. Mr. Thiaw stressed that no economic progress was achievable in the Sahel without energy. Renewable energy would also be essential to reduce food loss, promote the processing and transformation of local products and create new job opportunities in the region. The importance of technology transfer was highlighted as essential for the Sahel region to accelerate access to its vast renewable energy resources. The proposed climate-resilient agriculture initiatives would support ways to leverage technologies for prospective farmers in the region, including women and young people, to gain access to agricultural inputs, knowledge and resources.

To understand the situation on the ground, the Mayor of Dori, Burkina Faso, Ahmed Aziz Diallo, outlined the challenges that climate change posed to livelihoods in the north-eastern region of the country. He acknowledged the importance of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the Support Plan for the Sahel as a valid response strategy to strengthen the resilience of local communities in Burkina Faso and cross-border initiatives with communities in Mali and the Niger. Mr. Diallo described how local authorities were facilitating community investment in resilience

projects such as dam rehabilitation, canal digging, water management and storage, and animal fodder production. These projects had supported communities in improving the settlement of local conflicts associated with climate change-induced transhumance and to generate better prospects for young people in vulnerable situations.

Member States discussed how complex and multidimensional challenges in the Sahel presented opportunities to reverse the region's socioeconomic decline, falling agricultural productivity, forced migration, displacement and insecurity. Many delegations welcomed the proposed initiatives to combat the adverse impact of climate change and promote sustainable development, including the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel proposals outlined by Mr. Thiaw. Member States highlighted the commendable work of local authorities on adaptation and mitigation measures that needed international support. Adaptation of approaches was considered necessary to protect lives and livelihoods, eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. Some speakers mentioned the importance of enhancing the resilience of communities and societies, including women and young people, by building their dispute resolution capacities. Delegates also shared their own experiences on climate-resilient agriculture that could apply to the Sahel situation. Some delegates called for the innovative adaptation of technological solutions to local conditions in the region.

#### **Strengthening cooperation and coordination at all levels**

Member States welcomed the recalibrated United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel as a valuable tool to encourage better regional cooperation, foster more coherent and coordinated United Nations responses and accelerate progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The strategy and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel offer an opportunity to enhance coherence among the multiple strategies existing in the region. Many speakers echoed Mr. Thiaw's sentiment on a joint vision and response plan, noting that strong cooperation and coordination was required at the national, regional and international levels. Delegations consistently called for stronger partnerships and better coordination among all stakeholders operating in the Sahel to maximize the use of resources and the impact of action. A leading role for the United Nations, together with the African Union and subregional organizations, in coordinating these efforts could be further strengthened. Some speakers pointed out that progress was possible only by complementing peace and security efforts, including the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, with measures to achieve sustainable development.

Underscoring the inefficiencies of working through a "silos" approach, many Member States saw the Sahel strategy as a test case on the repositioning of the reformed United Nations development system in the Sahel region to ensure well-coordinated action of United Nations country teams on needs and risk assessments, planning, joint programming, targeted and pooled funding and monitoring and evaluation. In this regard, the capacity of the United Nations country team, including empowered resident coordinators, required improvement. Delegates also called upon the United Nations to facilitate better analysis and data collection on how climate change interacted with identified human risk factors. They noted the scarcity of development resources in the region and called for greater efforts to mobilize new financial sources for the region. In this regard, increasing overseas development assistance and support for international financial institutions for the Sahel was seen as essential. Member States also called for direct international financial assistance to local authorities to help them to respond to the needs of their communities. Speakers underscored the roles that the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission could play in mobilizing national, regional and international actors for

enhanced engagement in the Sahel. Some Member States called for raising awareness and resources for the Sahel at the upcoming high-level global summits, including the 2019 Climate Summit.

In conclusion, Mr. Jinga underscored how complementary Economic and Social Council and Peacebuilding Commission efforts could provide expert guidance and support to promote national ownership and leadership on resilience initiatives in the Sahel. Ms. King stressed the importance of having the Council and the Commission adopt a long-term approach to strengthen integrated strategies and expressed a commitment to sustaining international attention on the Sahel region.

### **Recommendations**

- The Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission could continue their engagement on the Sahel region to help to address climate change, promote sustainable development, and support peacebuilding and sustaining peace, in line with their respective mandates. The Council should use its coordination and oversight role of the United Nations development system to promote coordinated and coherent United Nations responses. The Commission, in turn, could continue to enhance its engagement with all countries and relevant peacebuilding actors and stakeholders in the Sahel region
- Accelerated efforts, including adequate and predictable resources, are required to implement local, national, cross-border, subregional and regional initiatives to address climate change effects in the Sahel, taking into account national ownership and the leadership of the States in the region. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the Support Plan for the Sahel should provide the implementation framework to maximize impact and coherence
- Local communities and civil society, in particular women and young people, could be engaged in efforts to address climate change, sustainable development and peacebuilding and sustaining peace
- Priority consideration and support is needed to build national capacities to address issues of climate change and sustaining peace, including through technology transfer to enhance longer-term recovery and resilience-building

Well-coordinated and strengthened United Nations country team action is required, including on joint assessments and analysis, planning, programming, targeted and pooled funding, and monitoring and evaluation.