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Provisional

President: Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2018/1175)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2018/1175)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, 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/2018/1175, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: I am honoured to be here today to introduce the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2018/1175) on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

Since my last briefing (see S/PV.8313), further progress has been made in democratic consolidation in West Africa and the Sahel, despite persisting security challenges. In the Lake Chad basin, Boko Haram attacks over the past months, notably against military installations, have increased. During the last week of December alone, Boko Haram launched three separate attacks on army bases in Borno and Yobe states of Nigeria, killing numerous soldiers, police personnel and civilians, and seizing equipment and weapons. Violent clashes between farmers and herders are also continuing, although on a lesser scale, thankfully, than in the first half of 2018.

The security situation also remains volatile in the Sahel. In Burkina Faso, a state of emergency has been declared in 7 of the country's 13 regions in the north, west and east, against a backdrop of a significant rise in security incidents. Despite mass mobilization, defence and security forces in the Niger continue to face challenges in the west and south. Increased attacks

and kidnappings by extremist groups are heightening security risks in the Niger, Benin and Togo. Rising insecurity has placed a heavy burden on Governments of the region against the backdrop of high population growth and worsening youth unemployment. Economic austerity measures, including the elimination of subsidies on basic items in some countries have also heightened social tensions.

In its efforts to advance the long-term stabilization goals of the region, UNOWAS continues to work closely with regional partners, including the Economic Community of West African States, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), including within the framework of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

Laudable progress has been made in the implementation of resolution 2349 (2017) to support a regional response to the crisis in the Lake Chad basin. On 30 August, the LCBC Council of Ministers adopted a regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad basin region. The meeting took place before the high-level conference on the Lake Chad region, which was held on 3 and 4 September in Berlin, during which partners pledged over \$2 billion to help meet the needs of the more than 17 million people affected by the crisis.

However, more support is needed to advance the stabilization efforts in the Sahel, and I commend partners for the commitment to providing \$2.4 billion to finance the Priority Investment Programme of the G-5 Sahel, which was presented on 6 December in Nouakchott. I urge Governments and partners to ensure the rapid implementation of those much-needed medium- and long-term stabilization measures, as well as the speedy disbursement of funds to respond to the urgent needs on the ground, thereby fostering stabilization, recovery and development.

I also commend the holding of the joint summit of Heads of State of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States, on 30 July 2018 in Lomé, as an important step towards addressing cross-border threats facing West and Central Africa. As one of the key outcomes of the summit, Heads of State and Government affirmed their readiness to enhance interregional collaboration to jointly address threats to peace and security, including from violent extremism. They also committed to holding regular meetings to

identify measures for the prevention and peaceful management of farmer-herder conflicts.

In the past six months, presidential elections were successfully organized in Mali; regional and parliamentary elections in Mauritania and Togo, respectively; and local elections in Côte d'Ivoire. However, despite appreciable progress in democratic consolidation in the region, there is a need for continuous efforts to address contentious issues around elections in order to prevent and mitigate election-related violence, as well as to support inclusive dialogue as a key attribute of inclusive societies. This is even more important as, over the next six months, the region will see several high-stake elections in Nigeria, Senegal, Mauritania and Benin.

In Nigeria, tensions are high ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections of 16 February and the gubernatorial and state assembly elections of 2 March. However, the prospects for peaceful and credible elections have increased following the signing of the national peace accord in Abuja on 11 December. Over the coming weeks, I will continue to engage actively with all stakeholders in Nigeria, in particular the National Peace Committee, including through the organization of peace forums in a number of key states, such as Benue, Rivers, Kaduna and Kano. Indeed, a few more may be included.

Several countries of the region also continue to struggle with justice and human rights challenges. I am particularly concerned about the allegations of human rights violations by security forces, as well as the increasing re-emergence of self-defence groups, whose actions have been fuelling intercommunal tensions in some countries. While security operations must be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, non-State actors also need to be held accountable for any crimes committed.

As reaffirmed in the recently concluded joint United Nations-World Bank study entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, women's marginalization continues to be a cause and consequence of instability and conflict. During the annual review of progress made in West Africa and the Sahel concerning the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the discrimination against and marginalization of women from political processes was once more highlighted.

During the event, which took place on 26 November in Praia, Cabo Verde, it was noted that women comprised fewer than 15 per cent of parliamentarians, for example, in several countries of the region. My Office will continue to work with all regional actors to strengthen the role of women in the region.

The next cycle of elections in the region will be a litmus test for the consolidation of democratic gains. Ensuring an enabling environment for the full respect of human rights will be key to the success of these elections and to safeguarding stability in the region. Furthermore, preparing the ground for elections through support for inclusive dialogue and national conflict-prevention capabilities will continue to constitute a priority for the region and my Office.

The rising number of attacks and the increasing sophistication in the tactics deployed by extremist groups risk undermining our collective efforts in the region. Military solutions, while necessary, are not sufficient. I encourage all actors to ensure holistic responses grounded in respect for human rights and the socioeconomic needs of the population in the affected areas. Through inclusive approaches predicated on national ownership, we must continue to work hard to address the governance deficits, extreme poverty and lack of development that feed and sustain armed violence and extremism.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council of the continued commitment of UNOWAS to working with all stakeholders in the region to promote peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel. I trust that we can continue to rely on the support of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

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

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the organization of this informative briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1175) on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). We commend Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, for the quality of his briefing, which enlightened our Council on the regional political and economic dynamics and the security threats impacting peace and stability.

Côte d'Ivoire notes with great interest the assessments and recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to the current situation in West Africa and the Sahel. We note with satisfaction that the political situation overall remains stable. The West African subregion overall is also enjoying a favourable socioeconomic situation, with an expected economic growth of 2.9 per cent in 2019.

The current economic and social trends give reason for hope and are part of an irreversible process of profound transformation in the societies of West Africa and the Sahel, despite the ongoing obstacles to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. My country believes that the dividends of this generally encouraging subregional economic situation should lead to a redistribution of the fruits of growth through the creation of employment for young people, the promotion of wealth-generating activities and quick-impact projects for women.

With regard to trends in the area of political governance and democracy, my country is happy to note political stability in the subregion, which nevertheless does not obviate the need to strengthen ongoing efforts to bolster democracy and good governance. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the outstanding work that has been done by Mr. Chambas as part of his mediation and good offices mission. Those missions, which were carried out in perfect cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and civil society partners, are fully in accordance with the principles of preventive diplomacy advocated by the Council.

With regard to the important electoral dates planned for 2019 and the ongoing political tensions in certain countries of the subregion, my country warmly encourages the Head of UNOWAS to intensify his mediation and good offices missions in the countries concerned with regard to ECOWAS. That subregional institution has fully demonstrated its ability to prevent and manage internal crises during its successive interventions in Guinea Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso and the Gambia. Côte d'Ivoire therefore calls on UNOWAS to further support the efforts deployed by ECOWAS, which has a comparative advantage in monitoring and supporting the political processes with a view to overcoming crises. We also call on it to strengthen regional conflict-resilience capacities, which are indispensable to building peace and stability in the region.

With regard to security, my delegation notes with concern the ongoing threats to subregional peace and security caused by the increase in terrorism and violent extremism. In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General notes an increase in the level of activism by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin region and the spike in the number of terrorist attacks in countries, such as Burkina Faso and the Niger. The terrorist groups that are active in the region increasingly exploit local vulnerabilities, in particular tensions among pastoralists and farmers and intercommunal conflicts, especially in areas where States find it difficult to fully exercise their authority. In the light of that situation, Côte d'Ivoire believes that combating terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel must be part of a holistic, coordinated approach that is focused on strengthening the response to subregional security and support for development initiatives that allow for the root causes of instability, such as poverty and unemployment, to be addressed.

With respect to security responses, Côte d'Ivoire calls for increased financial and logistical support from the international community to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Multinational Joint Task Force, which is a model that illustrates how countries of the region have taken ownership of their collective security. In addition, we recall the need for coordination among the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force and other missions on the ground, namely, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Operation Barkhane force. Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire believes that predictable and sustainable funding from United Nations mandatory contributions will have a positive impact on the sustainability and effectiveness of the forces I mentioned.

For my country, the current security response should be complemented by development strategies aimed at determining the structural causes of conflict and at responding to the pressing social needs of the people. In that regard, my country calls on the international community to support inclusive economic and social development programmes, in particular in the region of the Sahel, where young people who have fallen prey to poverty and unemployment are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the radical rhetoric of and recruitment offers from armed groups. Côte d'Ivoire underscores its support for the Alliance for the Sahel

and the G-5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme for the period 2019 to 2021, for which a total of €2.4 billion was raised during the round table held in Nouakchott on 6 December 2018. My country also welcomes the implementation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, whose aim is to better support States of the region in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure shared prosperity and a secure environment in the Sahel.

At this stage, let me underscore that Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea are working to organize a possible visit of the Security Council to Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in order to look into the situation in the region and support UNOWAS efforts. My country remains convinced that, despite the complexity of the challenge, UNOWAS remains an important conflict prevention tool in West Africa and the Sahel.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire encourages the Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to continue his efforts to promote peace, stability and development in West Africa and the Sahel.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for his excellent briefing.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1175) covers a broad and impressive array of issues. We would like to comment on a few that are of particular importance from our point of view.

First, we need sound international coordination as a key element of success. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General pointed out, cooperation among actors in the United Nations system, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and subregional organizations is key to success. Wherever we can, Germany contributes to reaching that objective through our own initiative. Special Representative Chambas mentioned the High-level Conference on the Lake Chad Region, held in Berlin in September 2018, which we organized together with Nigeria, Norway and the United Nations and at which \$2 billion was pledged. The conference showed the relevance of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and contributed to the implementation of resolution 2349 (2017). Regional cross-border cooperation is also key to success. We welcome the adoption of regional stabilization strategy of the Lake Chad Basin

Commission and the African Union (AU). The strategy will be essential for future cooperation.

Secondly, there needs to be a strategic focus on crisis prevention across the board. We need long-term sustainable development — economically, socially and environmentally and after transitions and mission exits. That also means effectively using the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as an advisory body to the Council. I would like to share a few thoughts on those issues.

Germany is one of the largest contributors to conflict prevention and peacebuilding and development activities within the United Nations system. We strongly support the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas to support African initiatives for sustaining regional peace. In particular, we appreciate the holistic approach that has been chosen, which is a combination of various instruments in our toolbox — mediation, reform processes, human rights and support to transparent, credible and peaceful elections, while urging States to ensure that basic democratic principles and preconditions are fulfilled.

Small arms and light weapons are another concern and are all too widespread in the region. We need to effectively counter the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. We support regional initiatives that aim to reach that very objective. That is why we provide comprehensive support for the control of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, as part of our strategic cooperation with ECOWAS and in building local capacity in Mali, the Niger and Nigeria.

With regard to the successful closures of the missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, to which Special Representative Chambas referred, we feel that they are possible models for future transitions and exits but, at the same time, we must consider long-term sustainable development, respect for human rights and stabilization. The peace dividends we gained by closing United Nations missions of that kind should be used to strengthen crisis prevention measures at the same time. In that regard, we advocate for the effective use of the Peacebuilding Commission as an advisory body to the Council. One example is the joint mission conducted by UNOWAS and the PBC to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia in October 2018. Germany is one of the largest donors to the Peacebuilding Fund and encourages member States to contribute to its budget.

My last point on crisis prevention is that, as the Special Representative pointed out, we are also concerned about the lack of effective participation by civil society and opposition in democratic processes, in some instances. We are also concerned about the arrest of human rights defenders and the violations of freedom of expression and assembly in a number of Western and Central African countries. We would be very interested to hear from the Special Representative about how he will address those issues in his future work.

Thirdly, the promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of the overall prevention effort. Counter-terrorism operations must also comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We strongly condemn all attacks carried out by terrorist organizations, especially by Boko Haram, and we are concerned about the increasingly complex and coordinated attacks in the region, as outlined by the Special Representative. Any security initiatives must comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. As the study by the United Nations Development Programme entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa* has shown, one driver of extremism is human rights violations by security forces, which is of particular concern. Let me provide some concrete examples in that connection.

We launched a United States-German initiative within the Global Counterterrorism Forum against the use of unmanned aerial systems by terrorists. West Africa is one of the focus regions of that initiative. We very much welcome regional initiatives to respond to the terrorist threat and overcome the challenges. The last example is the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad area, the Group of Five for the Sahel regional cell for the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism or the Joint Summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, held in Lomé in July 2018. Those are very good examples that show steps in the right direction.

For our fourth point, we would also like to highlight what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned, namely, the adverse effects of climate change and the ecological impact on the stability of West Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad region. Therefore, we need to intensify our activities and welcome the ongoing work of UNOWAS on the analysis of climate-related security risks in West Africa and the

Sahel. We also feel that the Council needs to take the latter into account and conduct the appropriate follow-up. We commend UNOWAS on its completion of the first stage of an analysis of climate-related risks in line with last year's presidential statement S/PRST/2018/16. There is a strong link between climate change and security. There is competition over scarce resources, water and land. That clearly underlines the need for the Council to consider the effects of climate change on security in a much more structured way. One such example involving the upsurge in, and spread of, violent conflict between herders and farmers due particularly to the adverse effects of climate change was brought up at as a source of concern at the joint ECOWAS-ECCAS summit held last year in Lomé. Germany has been very active in providing support for the Lake Chad Basin Commission since 2005 in the areas of organizational development and transboundary water management.

My final point involves the particularly worrisome situation of women and girls, as well as young people. They are exposed to abductions, detention and sexual violence by extremist groups, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General and the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Women and girls face threats particularly by extremist groups. One good example of how to counter that was, from our point of view, the joint United Nations-African Union mission led by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and AU Special Envoy Bineta Diop to the Sahel, South Sudan, Nigeria and Chad in July 2018, with a focus on women and peace and security. We would be interested to hear from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General if he could provide us with some of his reflections on the follow-up to that visit. Women need to participate in all kinds of conflict resolution and mediation phases and activities. That holds particularly true for local mechanisms, and we would very much welcome any further activity by UNOWAS in that regard.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) for his briefing, which, as always, was very enlightening.

UNOWAS is a valuable tool that enables the United Nations to play a role not only in conflict prevention but also in peacebuilding, in line with the Secretary-General's vision for sustainable effective action that must cover the entire peace continuum. We hope that

the strategic review to be undertaken in the coming months will provide an opportunity to ensure that UNOWAS is provided with all the resources needed to accomplish its mission. Preventing crises rather than resolving them after the fact is, of course, the best way to avoid suffering, as well as to achieve shared savings.

I will make several remarks with regard to responding to the crisis at hand. The deterioration of the security situation in a number of regions of West Africa is an alarming development that requires our continued action. That is especially the case in the Sahel, where the terrorist threat is spreading geographically together with a dangerous increase in intercommunal tensions not only in central Mali but also, as of now, in the north-western part of Burkina Faso. The same holds true for the area surrounding the Lake Chad basin, where the increase in attacks by Boko Haram is threatening once again territories that were only recently liberated from its control. As always, a response to those crises and threats depends on a comprehensive approach encompassing political, security and development aspects, which is a point that we have often insisted upon given its importance.

In the Sahel, France is committed to supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali by the Malian parties, which, in the short term, will require the priority measures identified in resolution 2423 (2018) to be implemented by next March. France is engaged in combating terrorist groups through Operation Barkhane, as well as its support for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel through the mobilization of the Alliance for the Sahel to provide faster, better coordinated and more targeted assistance to the most vulnerable populations. In the Lake Chad basin, more must be done to support the continued action of the States of the Multinational Joint Task Force and ensure that its work is conducted in a manner that ensures the people's full support. The United Nations has a central role to play in helping the States of the region identify appropriate and coherent responses in all its aspects. Work must be carried out in the short term to ensure that the resources implemented by the United Nations system on the ground correspond to the needs of the countries most affected by the current violence. We believe that such work is particularly urgent and critical in the case of Burkina Faso.

In addition to the steps that we have taken in those crisis areas, it is more important than ever to preserve the fundamental elements needed to ensure regional stability in West Africa and the Sahel. In that regard, I will underline three key points.

First of all, as the Special Representative just reminded us, credible, transparent and inclusive electoral processes are required. In Nigeria, we welcome the commitment of all actors to respect the outcome of the elections and refrain from violence, as part of the prevention work by actors in the region and UNOWAS. In Guinea-Bissau, it is necessary that, this time, the authorities respect their commitment to the holding of legislative elections on 10 March, as was requested by the Economic Community of West African States and the Security Council. In other countries, such as Togo and Guinea, it is important to continue consultations among all stakeholders so as to strengthen the inclusiveness and acceptability of future electoral processes. Focus must be placed on strengthening the representation of women in areas of responsibility, which is hardly the case in the countries of the region at the present time.

Respect for the rights of all and the fight against impunity are also key factors for achieving stability. The many abuses committed against civilian populations in the various conflict areas of the region must not go unanswered, no matter who committed them. The transitional justice processes under way, in particular in Mali and the Gambia, must be seen to fruition in order to create the conditions necessary for sustainable reconciliation. The protection of children in conflict must be the focus of our attention, and UNOWAS has a clear role to play in following up that issue. Stability also goes hand in hand with long-term support for countries emerging from crises. The continued involvement of the international community in supporting Liberia, following the closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, is particularly critical for ensuring the success of the remarkable democratic transition that took place just a year ago in that country.

I will conclude my statement in the same way that the representative of Germany concluded his, by stressing that the link between climate and security is becoming increasingly clear in the countries of the Sahel. The effects of climate change are creating tensions over resources with a direct impact on populations in the region. Accordingly, the sustainable management of those resources, such as water and

arable land, constitutes one of the conditions necessary for maintaining stability in an area like the Sahel, characterized by political and social vulnerabilities. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, as well as the establishment of a regional dialogue on climate and environmental issues, are essential in that regard. That will be the main focus of the meeting of the Climate Commission for the Sahel Region to be held in early February in Niamey. UNOWAS has a strong role to play in actively supporting that dynamic.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Chambas for his briefing here today, which clearly outlined areas of progress as well as the immense challenges that remain in West Africa.

We appreciate the work that the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) does in support of international peace and security in fostering freedom and good governance across West Africa and the Sahel. We also recognize and pay tribute to the sacrifices that thousands of security forces members and peacekeepers make every day to create a more prosperous and stable region. To those ends, I will highlight a few core priorities that we believe merit the attention of UNOWAS and the Security Council in the coming months.

In the Sahel, we share Mr. Chambas' concerns about the increasing intercommunal violence, the rise in insecurity along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, the continued prevalence of terrorist and criminal activity throughout the region and allegations of human rights abuses by non-State armed groups and security forces.

We share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the growing sophistication and reach of violent extremist organizations in parts of the Sahel. Only by promoting good governance, addressing the root causes of instability, creating economic opportunity, respecting human rights and enhancing security can the region make sustained progress towards addressing those challenges. We are particularly concerned by the increasing unrest in the central Sahel, which is at least partly driven by the scarcity of resources. We are concerned that over time, local communities may begin seeing these disputes through an ethnic lens. In that connection, we are pleased that UNOWAS recently completed its study on pastoralism and security in West Africa and the Sahel and look forward to coordinating

with it as it seeks to incorporate the findings into the work that the United Nations is doing in the region.

Mali is at the centre of the region, with its own unique political and security challenges and its Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. We call once again on the parties to that Agreement to make significant progress over the next few months. In particular, we hope that they implement the measures laid out in resolution 2423 (2018). Going forward, we cannot and should not accept the unwillingness that we have seen in the past by the parties to fully and rapidly implement the Mali Agreement. The stakes are too high, both for the people of Mali and for the region, and the Security Council should consider using all available tools, including sanctions, against those who obstruct implementation.

In the Lake Chad basin, the security and humanitarian situations remain a concern. The lack of humanitarian access to large parts of the region continues to take a heavy toll on populations in need of assistance, in particular women and children. While the region has made progress in coordinating efforts against Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province, it is clear that those violent extremist organizations remain dangerous threats.

Finally, we remain focused on Nigeria's February national elections as a critical test of democracy in both Nigeria and the wider region. The United States continues to support the Nigerian goal of free and fair elections, held in a peaceful and appropriately transparent manner, that reflect the will of the Nigerian people. Through diplomacy; robust public engagement, including with youth and civil society; and democracy and governance programmes, we are helping the country to strengthen its democratic institutions and processes.

In advance of February's elections, we share many of the concerns expressed by Nigerian observers and our international partners regarding the political climate in key areas of risk. Specifically, we are concerned about reports of intimidation and partisanship by security forces, heightened insecurity, the inability of internally displaced persons or persons with disabilities to vote, and the risk that widespread vote-buying could challenge the integrity of the electoral process. We urge the Nigerian authorities and political parties, civil society and community leaders to address those risks in the run-up to February's election and to ensure that the

election is genuinely free and fair and held in a peaceful and appropriately transparent manner.

Twenty years after the country's return to democratic rule, the upcoming elections provide Nigerians with an opportunity to shape the future of their country and further solidify its place as a democratic leader in Africa.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the valuable briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, on the important work that is being carried out by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

As the Special Representative has stated, despite the fact that some progress has been made in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, the continuing insecurity and political tensions in the region are deplorable, as is the tragic humanitarian situation, particularly in the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin, which is the result of the actions of terrorist groups, transnational crime, clashes over the control of natural resources and a limited State presence, among other factors.

Peru is convinced that those challenges require a multidimensional, long-term and integrated approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict. In that context, we would like to highlight three areas in which UNOWAS is called upon to play a central role in the coming months.

First, with respect to electoral monitoring and preventive action, we emphasize the functions of monitoring and early warning with respect to the political situation in the region, which are complemented by mediation and good offices, capacities that we believe must continue to be strengthened and enhanced. In that context, we look forward to the role that UNOWAS will be playing in the upcoming elections in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Nigeria and Senegal, based on the model of transparent and inclusive processes with the full participation of women and young people.

Secondly, with regard to regional cooperation, we would highlight the comparative advantage that UNOWAS has to articulate a regional vision and action to combat common scourges such as terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime. We welcome the fact that such action is complemented by effective

coordination with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other subregional organizations and United Nations offices. We would underline also the advisory function provided by UNOWAS concerning the necessary reforms in the security sector, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants, and the promotion of local dialogue.

Thirdly, with respect to the field of development promotion, we know that building a sustainable peace implies a synergy among peace, justice and development that allows for the construction of robust, transparent institutions. Only in that way can the deep causes of the conflict be effectively addressed in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. From that perspective, we welcome the priority that UNOWAS attaches to the promotion of sustainable and safe development in the region. We highlight its particular interest in intercommunal conflicts arising as a result of climate change and the preparation of intersectoral studies on this subject. We also highlight its leadership in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2391 (2017).

I would like to conclude by expressing our strong support for the role of UNOWAS and by encouraging the international community to continue to cooperate closely with the regional Office and the Special Representative in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace in West Africa and the Sahel.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his very informative briefing on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as well as on current developments in the region.

Allow me to share a few observations.

Significant security challenges, including an increase in the cross-border activities of terrorist groups and a retreat of State authorities from peripheral zones, continues to affect a number of countries in the region. The deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso requires a strong reaction on the part of the international community and the provision of support to the local authorities in combating terrorist groups, whose activities in the Sahel region continue to increase.

We strongly condemn the violent terrorist attacks as well as the intercommunal clashes in northern regions of Burkina Faso. We also call on all inhabitants of the region to make joint efforts to fight terrorism and to promote national reconciliation. We encourage the local authorities to sustain its security-sector reforms consistently and to create conditions conducive to sustainable peace and development.

We commend the generally peaceful elections conducted in the region. However, pre- and post-electoral periods are often characterized by antagonistic contestations and disputes. Therefore, we call on the authorities and national stakeholders to work together to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in 2019 in Benin, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal.

The continuing underrepresentation of women in senior Government positions in West Africa and the Sahel is a matter of concern. We therefore call on Governments in the region to redouble their efforts, in accordance with national and regional commitments, to enhance the empowerment and political inclusion of women in decision-making and leadership roles, and to promote inclusive, gender-responsive development.

Poland supports countries in the Sahel region in their efforts to address security challenges. Last month my country therefore handed over its first batch of ammunition to the Chadian armed forces as a support to Chad's contribution to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

As the Special Representative mentioned, climate change has had a serious impact on the dynamics of conflict in the Lake Chad basin and parts of the Sahel. In that regard, we call on national, regional and international partners to develop a regional framework, in line with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, to respond proactively to the current and projected threats posed by climate change. Poland would also like to express its deep appreciation for all parties' engagement both in the run-up to and during the twenty-fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Katowice. We believe that multilateralism and cooperation will enable us to address problems together, find solutions and build consensus for the common good.

The challenges in West Africa and the Sahel are complex and multidimensional and require a sustained and holistic approach on the part of all stakeholders. In that regard, we commend the engagement of the Governments of West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the G-5 Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in cooperation with UNOWAS. We also commend the efforts of Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, the Special Adviser for the Sahel, to foster the implementation of United Nations Integrated Strategy through the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. Last but not least, I want to express my gratitude to Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the staff of UNOWAS, for their continued efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to welcome and thank the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for his extensive and informative presentation.

On behalf of my country, I would like to commend the progress and positive results that we are seeing in West Africa. We appreciate the continued support and efforts of UNOWAS and other regional and international entities in the areas of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, democratic transfers of power, respect for human rights, inclusivity, women's participation in political, social and economic processes and constitutional order in the region. The challenges facing the region are significant, but the serious political commitment and great desire on the part of national and regional actors to overcome them, with the support of the international community, give us reason to believe that in the long run, all of us who fight for peace will prevail.

We are going through a very difficult and critical time, owing to the precarious security situation and instability in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria. Terrorist groups, and Boko Haram in particular, are still in that area and continuing their indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the military. Despite the increase in military operations in the north and east of the Niger, there are daily incidents of violence that pose ongoing challenges to the defence and security forces. Conflicts between farmers and shepherds are getting worse,

despite the continued calls for collaboration between UNOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and officials responsible for agriculture, livestock and security in the regions concerned, with a view to establishing effective mechanisms for preventing, mediating and resolving conflicts, which could bring a new dimension of peace and security to the region.

It is important to stress that the humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel remains worrying, especially with regard to food security and forced displacements in the Lake Chad basin, where many people live in subhuman conditions. The international community must redouble its efforts to contribute to the 2019 humanitarian response plan for the Lake Chad basin in order to help the people in the area who are most vulnerable and defuse the cholera epidemic, which has been claiming lives since 2010. As we might expect, terrorist activity is both a cause and consequence of that desperate situation.

Equatorial Guinea strongly supports the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan, and welcomes the link it establishes between the political, security and humanitarian fronts. We therefore consider very important the progress of regional initiatives, such as the official launch of disarmament, demobilization and socioeconomic reinsertion programmes, as well as the signing in Niamey on 30 October of a partnership protocol between the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Sahel Alliance that provides a framework for collaboration and operational mobilization aimed at implementing joint projects quickly and flexibly.

The fight against piracy and maritime crime is one of my country's regional security policy priorities. That is why during our presidency of the Security Council next month we will hold a debate on transnational organized crime at sea. However, we would like to take this opportunity to commend the effective work that UNOWAS is doing in the Gulf of Guinea in that area, in collaboration with other specialized agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In that regard, together with Côte d'Ivoire, my country is intending to lead an official Security Council mission to West Africa very soon to support UNOWAS's efforts for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the region.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General

Chambas for his briefing. Recently the situation in West Africa and the Sahel has been largely stable, and a number of countries in the region have registered positive progress with their political processes. At the same time, the countries of the region are still dealing with threats such as the activities of violent extremist and terrorist groups, cross-border organized crime and natural disasters. China hopes that the international community will strengthen its cooperation and respond jointly to the region's security challenges. I would like to make the following four points.

First, the international community should provide strong support to the countries of the region in fighting cross-border organized crime and the activities of terrorist organizations. The Multinational Joint Task Force formed by countries in the Lake Chad basin, and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), represent the region's independent responses to those challenges and its joint efforts to maintain collective security, and an important contribution by African States to peace and security in the region. China supports the provision of the necessary financial support by the United Nations to the G-5 Sahel for operationalizing the Joint Force.

Secondly, the international community should support the efforts of regional and subregional organizations to play their unique roles. Countries in West Africa and the Sahel are dealing with difficulties such as cross-border security challenges and humanitarian needs that require a joint response on the part of the countries in the region. The international community should respect African aspirations, respond to African needs and support the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to properly handle and resolve regional and subregional problems.

Thirdly, the international community should address the root causes of conflicts when assisting the countries of the region in handling hotspot issues. The international community should focus on building the capacities of the countries of the region, support the countries concerned in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063, and assist the countries of the region in eliminating, as soon as possible, the root causes of conflict so as to achieve sustainable development.

Fourthly, the various United Nations agencies should enhance their coordination and create synergies.

UNOWAS should continue to work in accordance with its mandate, enhance collaboration with all actors concerned and promote regional peace and stability. The United Nations country team and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as other agencies, should fully leverage their respective advantages, enhance coordination and cooperation with UNOWAS and play a constructive role for regional peace, stability and development. China will continue to support the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas and UNOWAS going forward.

Strengthening cooperation with African countries as well as other developing States has always been a priority of Chinese diplomacy. Last September, during the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, peace, security and economic development, *inter alia*, were identified as the priority areas of China-Africa cooperation going forward. The China-Africa Peace and Security Fund and the China-Africa Security Forum, which were created by the Forum on Africa-China Cooperation, have provided active support to the efforts of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel in maintaining regional security and combating terrorism, and they serve as important platforms for the enhanced exchanges between China and Africa in the area of peace and security.

Since its inception, the China-United Nations Peace and Development Fund has provided financial support to a number of African projects for building peacekeeping and counter-terrorism capacities. The successful visit by China's State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wang Yi, earlier this month served to further consolidate the friendly relations between China and Africa and deepen the results-oriented cooperation between the two sides. China will work together with the international community in providing continued support to Africa to facilitate capacity-building for peace and security as well as socioeconomic development, with a view to achieving peace, stability and prosperity in the region at an early date.

Mr. Clay (United Kingdom): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for his briefing and for his team's work in West Africa and the Sahel. His efforts continue to be an invaluable bulwark against the forces of instability in the region.

The United Kingdom welcomes the progress set out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

this morning but remains concerned by the security and political situation in large parts of the region. Many of our concerns are reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1175), including the threats from terrorist groups such as Boko Haram in countries including Nigeria and other groups operating in the Sahel that wreak havoc on vulnerable populations and systematically violate women's rights.

As we have discussed many times before in the Council, both military and non-military action is required to address these threats. We must understand their root causes and the political, security, development and humanitarian needs of the population. It is essential that we adopt a coherent, whole-of-United Nations approach to tackle existing problems and prevent further deterioration in the region.

I would like to begin by addressing the situation in the Lake Chad basin. The magnitude of this crisis is profound; the combination of terrorism, extreme poverty and climate change has rendered some 10 million people dependent on humanitarian aid. More than 2.4 million people have been forced to abandon their homes, and the cholera epidemic is the worst in nearly a decade. A regional response to the crisis in the Lake Chad basin is critical. We therefore welcome the collaboration between the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, as well as the joint summit of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in July, which demonstrated the commitment of both organizations to strengthening their cooperation.

Leaders of the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission also met in December to reinforce the region's approach to tackling Boko Haram. Regional counter-terrorism cooperation is vital to addressing a threat that does not respect borders. The Secretary-General reminds us in his report that cooperation between terrorist groups is growing in the Sahel region.

But the region cannot be left to manage this crisis alone. That is why the United Kingdom led the drafting of resolution 2349 (2017), in 2017, and why, at last September's high-level conference in Berlin, the United Kingdom committed \$186 million to supporting an integrated response to the crisis.

It is vital that we follow up the success of the Berlin Conference and ensure that the international

community strengthens its commitment to tackling the problems of the region, including through supporting the implementation of the United Nations support plan for the Sahel.

In the light of the importance of the Sahel, the United Kingdom is in the process of scaling up our diplomatic, defence and development assistance in the region. We are opening new embassies in the Niger and Chad and increasing our presence in Mali. We have deployed Chinook helicopters to provide logistical support to the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force through Operation Barkhane and will be significantly increasing our development assistance to the region in the coming years.

At last month's Council briefing on the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (see S/PV.8435), we called on international actors to ensure that organizational responsibilities were clearly delineated and that strong lines of communication were set up between them. I am encouraged in this respect by the close cooperation between UNOWAS, the Office of the United Nations Special Adviser for the Sahel, ECOWAS and others. We also recognize the efforts made by UNOWAS elsewhere in the region and the close engagement of the Special Representative with national efforts to sustain peace, as in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

UNOWAS has a crucial role in supporting the States of the subregion in the holding of timely, transparent and inclusive elections and in supporting the efforts of ECOWAS and others to lay the groundwork for the structural prevention of election-related violence. With elections scheduled in several countries in the region in 2019, this will be an important theme of the year to come.

One of the strengths of UNOWAS has been to act as a bridge between national players and regional and international actors. We would encourage this to continue. In Burkina Faso, for example, regional cooperation and international support will be vital to tackling instability and the risks to the wider region, and UNOWAS has the credentials to leverage and facilitate such cooperation.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the role that the Peacebuilding Fund and its implementing partners are playing in supporting reconciliation in Burkina Faso and hopes that United Nations will maintain its

commitment to using the resources of the Fund to support reconciliation activities across the region.

UNOWAS has demonstrated that it can be a valuable partner for regional Governments and organizations. We look forward to engaging with the strategic review process later this year to ensure that UNOWAS is best equipped to fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is a pleasure for me to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and to thank him for his useful briefing on the most recent developments in the Sahel region. We also commend the efforts made by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in a number of areas, as well as the efforts of all the staff of the regional Office to provide technical and electoral assistance to the States that hold elections in the region, while exercising good offices so as to reduce tensions. The role of the Office in strengthening Government sectors to confront the various challenges of the region is also important.

I should like to focus on three key aspects: first, the elections in the Sahel region; secondly, the security situation in the region; and, thirdly, the humanitarian and development situations.

Concerning the elections in the Sahel region, we would like to refer to the elections held in a number of countries in the region and to welcome the efforts of the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Mali to hold transparent and successful elections. Those positive developments will undoubtedly contribute to achieving development and stability and have a positive impact on the regional security situation in general.

We commend the vital and central role of UNOWAS and the Economic Community of West African States, as well as that of the African Union and other international, regional and national organizations, in contributing to the success of the electoral processes and providing the necessary assistance to States of the region.

We hope that the upcoming elections in Nigeria, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau will be held in conditions of transparency and with the participation of all segments of society. We call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue the efforts that he has undertaken, in the midst of the challenges facing certain States of the region, to avert tensions during

preparations for the holding of elections. UNOWAS and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General play a pivotal role in implementing the Secretary-General's strategy for preventive diplomacy and avoiding conflicts.

Concerning the security situation in West Africa and the Sahel region, it remains unstable due to armed conflicts and terrorist operations in general. Such actions have now gone beyond their traditional nature and have extended to maritime piracy, leading to revenue losses and the deterioration of economies in a number of States in the region. In addition, a key problem in the region is drug trafficking, which is a topic that was addressed by the Security Council last month (see S/PV.8433). During that meeting, the important role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was highlighted. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1175) on the roles of UNOWAS and UNODC in supporting regional States to address that challenge.

The unstable security situation in the Republic of Mali has a negative impact on the entire region, since it facilitates transnational terrorist acts and affects many regional States, claiming the lives of many innocent civilians. We call on all relevant stakeholders in Mali to abide by the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation of 2015. We also appreciate the role and efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force in combating the terrorist group of Boko Haram, and the role of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in combating terrorist groups as well.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region, especially in the Lake Chad basin, where 1 million people suffered food insecurity in the first half of 2018. Nevertheless, we welcome the efforts of the Governments and active humanitarian organizations, which contributed to the decline of the cholera epidemic since 2010. However, more funding is required by the region in order to ensure the implementation of the response plan. Only 50 per cent of the pledges made have been fulfilled so far. We call on all relevant parties in the region to provide access to all humanitarian assistance for all those in need in the Lake Chad basin, particularly the elderly and children.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for the efforts of UNOWAS to prevent conflicts and to strengthen the capacities of the national authorities

in the States of the region in order to achieve all the objectives in West Africa. That would ensure a better future for the region and its populations. We welcome the cooperation of States in the region with UNOWAS to date and call on them to continue their cooperation with the United Nations Office in the upcoming period. We also underscore the support of the State of Kuwait for achieving stability in the region.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): My delegation would like to express its gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I also thank Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), for his briefing.

South Africa supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in engaging in preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation in the countries of West Africa and the Sahel. We welcome the positive developments in the region, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1175). However, we are concerned that the instability and insecurity are spreading to other countries in the region. That would adversely affect the progress that has been made in recent years to seek stability in the region.

That concern is equally shared by the African Union, particularly with regard to the continued terrorist attacks in northern and central Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Nigeria. Moreover, the intensification of coordination among terrorist groups and the growing transnational organized crime are a cause for great concern for South Africa, since that will heighten the insecurity in the region. It is important that we also address the root causes of terrorism in order to curb its spread throughout the continent.

South Africa believes that UNOWAS is positioned to play an important role in overcoming the challenges faced by the region, particularly with regard to tackling the insecurity, instability and terrorism, through its support of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and by addressing the root causes of conflict. Furthermore, the full implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is vital.

We are of the firm view that the work of the Security Council should aim to support subregional and regional multilateral frameworks and the use of political dialogue in resolving the challenges faced

by the region. Furthermore, coordination among the Economic Community of West African States, the Group of Five for the Sahel, the African Union and United Nations structures is crucial. That is key to providing a comprehensive approach in promoting peace and security in the Sahel region, where terrorism, extremist activities and violent extremism pose a serious threat to its socioeconomic development.

The international community's ongoing support for the funding of investment projects in the Sahel in particular remains a priority. The building of schools and health centres and improving access to water, for example, would positively contribute to preventing communities from falling under the influence of extremists.

Lastly, South Africa condemns in the strongest possible terms the attempted coup to overthrow the democratically elected Government in the Republic of Gabon. In that regard, we reaffirm the principle of the African Union, which rejects the notion of an unconstitutional change of power. We pledge our solidarity with the region, and we stand by it as it deals with the many challenges in improving the lives of its people.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/1175), which underlines the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the progress of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and provides an update on the situation on the ground. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mohamed Ibn Chambas for his insightful briefing to the Council.

Indonesia supports and commends the work of UNOWAS in its good offices and preventive diplomacy in West Africa and the Sahel. We are of the view that, albeit relatively underpublicized, conflict prevention remains a central responsibility for the whole Organization, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that engagement by UNOWAS with Governments, civil societies and regional and subregional organizations is crucial to addressing both the immediate and the deeper causes of conflicts in the region. Having said that, allow me to highlight three

pertinent points with regard to ensuring stability and sustained peace in West Africa and the Sahel.

First, Indonesia welcomes the positive developments in West Africa and the Sahel, including elections, progress on national reconciliation and political dialogue in many parts of the region. We cannot overemphasize the importance of peaceful and transparent elections in laying the ground for the consolidation of democracy, good governance and Government effectiveness in delivering public services.

Secondly, we are deeply concerned about the continued threat posed by terrorist groups and criminal networks to security in West Africa and the Sahel, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. As the report suggests, the organizational capacities and reach of violent extremist groups are increasingly sophisticated. There has also been an increase in the casualties inflicted on civilians and the military. It is therefore important that we further strengthen the collective response to combat terrorism and violent extremism. The threat posed by Boko Haram is still evident, as Mr. Chambas reports. Terrorism and violent extremism have affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in dire need of help. We also note the increase in maritime threats and piracy off the coast of West Africa, which continue to pose a threat to peace, security and development in the region.

Indonesia welcomes the leadership of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel in spearheading initiatives to address security challenges through the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). Indonesia sees the need for continued support, particularly in capacity-building and predictable financing for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. Yet as we have so often heard, a military-focused solution alone is not sufficient to address the deeper drivers of insecurity across the region. Security initiatives must be complemented by efforts to address the root causes of instability. State presence and governance, development and social inclusion, employment and livelihoods, as well as environmental pressures, desertification and climate change, are areas that should be focused on.

We are of the view that a holistic approach that encompasses the dimensions of peace and security, development and human rights is essential. In that regard, we underline the importance of economic development and call on the international community

to support efforts in that area aimed at helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We also acknowledge the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in sustaining peace and peacebuilding efforts. Its focus on reconstruction and institution-building is very important for laying the foundations for sustainable development in the region. We also look forward to greater cooperation between the PBC and the Security Council in that regard.

This brings me to my third and last point. Many of the security challenges in West Africa and the Sahel are cross-border and intertwined in nature. There is a pressing need for enhanced cooperation in the regional context. We should also work to forge greater cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. We view the role of UNOWAS in partnership with Governments, regional and subregional organizations, as well as other international organizations, as crucial in supporting the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. I was also glad to hear in the Special Representative's briefing just now that his Office is working closely with regional actors to strengthen the role of women in the region. We look forward to that. We also look forward the strategic review of UNOWAS in 2019 and hope that it will result in enhancing the Office's capacity to carry out its important mandate.

In conclusion, I would also like to pay tribute to the many United Nations peacekeepers, Blue Helmets and personnel on the ground who have done a remarkable job and played an important role in fostering peace and stability in the region. We are also honoured that Indonesian peacekeepers are involved in that regard.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Special Representative Chambas for his very comprehensive briefing. Belgium salutes his daily work on behalf of prevention, reconciliation, lasting peace and the promotion of the rule of law in West Africa.

The precarious security situation continues to worry us. I am thinking in particular of the intensification of intercommunal violence in several countries in the region, such as the Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. In Burkina Faso, the increasing and spreading terrorist attacks on the people and the Government of Burkina Faso in the north, east and even south of the country are a particularly alarming development. In that regard, we

note President Kaboré's declaration on 31 December of a state of emergency in the 14 provinces affected. These terrorist attacks jeopardize development and threaten regional stability. In Nigeria, the resurgence of violent attacks by Boko Haram is also very worrisome.

Belgium commends the courage and sacrifices of the security forces in their fight against terrorists. At the same time, we will not be able to end this conflict by ignoring human rights. If we do, the successes of the security forces will be merely ephemeral and will jeopardize reconciliation and a lasting end to the crisis. Moreover, as the report emphasizes, the response to the challenges facing West Africa cannot focus exclusively on security. A holistic approach is needed to deal with violent extremism, with an emphasis on good governance, dialogue and mediation, as well as sustainable and inclusive development.

Finally, the proliferation of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, which Mr Chambas has reported on to the Council in the past, deserves special attention because these tensions are currently a major factor for insecurity in the subregion and even beyond. I commend the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) for its recent launch of a study of the causes of these conflicts. I encourage UNOWAS to ensure the implementation of its recommendations and thank it in advance for continuing to keep the Council informed in the future.

The efforts of the Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone deserve our support. National reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction and security-sector reform are major challenges for those States, which are in the process of strengthening their democratic institutions. The political will to entrench good governance, democracy and human rights will be decisive if they are to make their gains last and participate in sustainable development. I want to underline the important role played by the Peacebuilding Commission in supporting these countries by maintaining a dialogue among all parties concerned. And the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund remain crucial to addressing specific needs. Belgium welcomes its prevention-focused approach. These efforts should build on the new structure of Resident Coordinators in a delivering-as-one approach.

UNOWAS also has another pioneering role to play. While everyone agrees that a changing climate is one of the causes of conflicts in the Sahel, UNOWAS is implementing the will of the Council by studying the

impact of climate change in the context of a conflict-prevention approach. That is critical work and I encourage the Special Representative to continue it.

In conclusion, I would also like to stress the primary role played by regional and subregional organizations. I encourage them to maintain their close coordination with UNOWAS. Experience and history show us that it is by joining forces that we obtain the most convincing results.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, for the information he has provided. We would like to assure him once again that Russia supports his personal efforts and the activities of his Office in resolving regional crises and issues of political mediation and assistance in improving State and human rights institutions, the quest for ways to achieve economic development and the fight against extremism and terrorism.

It is encouraging that in the second half of 2018, elections took place in a number of the countries in the region in a generally calm atmosphere. We hope that the new electoral cycle beginning this year, which includes an even greater number of countries, will also take place in lawful and orderly conditions.

We have to agree with Mr. Chambas that, despite the efforts that have been made, extremism, terrorism and organized crime, unfortunately, continue to gather strength in the region. As an epicentre of this kind of lawless activity, the States of the Sahel, to a significant extent, have become victims of the rogue actions of some countries that led to regime change in Libya. If the situation there is not stabilized, it will not be easy to achieve peace and stability in the Sahel, as many regional stakeholders have rightly pointed out.

Eradicating terrorism is one of the top priorities on the African agenda. In that regard, the efforts of States in the region to combat the growing challenges are extremely timely, and that is all the more important in the current circumstances, when terrorist groups are increasingly actively coordinating their actions. We support the operations of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force aimed at fighting Boko Haram, and we are providing assistance to African Governments through bilateral channels. We do not believe in the possibility of dialogue with terrorists, including Boko Haram.

Unfortunately, security threats affect States' ability to deal with their socioeconomic problems, which is why efforts to ensure security and stability efforts have to be implemented as part of a comprehensive approach. Military and counter-terrorism measures must be combined with efforts to strengthen State institutions, undertake systemic economic and social development, promote a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law and provide jobs for young people. We greatly appreciate the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Organization's specialized agencies in providing a broad range of assistance to the countries of the region. It is crucial to ensure that those efforts are closely coordinated with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other organizations.

We consider it important to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, since we feel that its potential has not yet been fully realized. The views of the countries for which it was developed are crucial to achieving that. It will also be impossible to get anything done without properly coordinating the numerous assistance programmes for the region. Their effectiveness also depends on whether the entities that are present in the region — and I particularly have in mind those that are part of the United Nations system — are operating within their area of responsibility and taking into account the principle of division of labour. It seems to us that only through purposeful collective action that is carried out in appropriate formats and does not create conflicting areas of competence can we achieve the results we seek.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic would like to thank Mr. Mohamed Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), for his excellent briefing. We are grateful for the important work that UNOWAS is doing to support the consolidation of peace and democratic governance in the region.

With regard to the political situation, we want to commend the peoples of West Africa and the Sahel for their conduct of free and democratic electoral processes that have enabled stability to be maintained

in the region despite the difficulties arising from its complex security and political challenges. We urge the countries that will be participating in the next cycle of elections to work to minimize tensions and manage their differences with a view to ensuring peaceful elections. In that context, we commend UNOWAS efforts to promote dialogue between the parties so as to fulfil their political agreements.

We are concerned about the security problems in the region, especially the growing numbers of attacks on civilians and soldiers by extremist groups, relapses into violence between communities and piracy, among other things, all of which lead to the loss of lives, violations and abuses of human rights, displaced populations and the destruction of property, as has already been pointed out today. This situation, which is exacerbated by external factors, has meant that some 24 million people in the region are in need of humanitarian aid. We urge the international community to redouble its efforts to implement the necessary mechanisms for protecting those who are most vulnerable. The Dominican Republic firmly condemns the sexual violence, corporal punishment and arbitrary detention to which women are subjected by terrorist groups, and we urge that efforts continue to be made to adopt appropriate legislative frameworks to eradicate and prevent such abuses. We deplore the fact that despite the progress that has been made, the representation of women in high-level public positions in the region is minimal. We believe that the launch of the Women's Platform of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the adoption of a road map for the Platform's activities represent a positive step in this direction. However, we should continue to redouble efforts to increase women's empowerment and political inclusion.

We also urge UNOWAS to continue supporting processes for security-sector reform, and we call on the region to maintain an integrated approach to combating insecurity. Controlling the spread of conflicts to neighbouring countries and ensuring that the perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice is

crucial to achieving lasting peace in the region. The quest for solutions to cross-cutting threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel should focus on joint initiatives such as the operationalization of the Mano River Union cross-border security strategy and other related projects. In that regard, we commend the meeting of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States for its contribution to reaffirming their commitments to cooperating on efforts to deal with their regions' shared challenges.

The Dominican Republic is concerned about the effects of natural disasters and extreme conditions related to climate change in West Africa and the Sahel, including floods, droughts and prolonged periods of famine, which is to a great extent responsible for undermining the means of subsistence available to the people of the region, and which leads to a struggle for survival and mass population displacements. In that regard, in its presidential statement of 10 August (S/PRST/2018/16), the Security Council acknowledged the adverse effects of climate change, environmental change and natural disasters in the region of West Africa and the Sahel. We encourage UNOWAS and the international community to continue their efforts to overcome this great challenge at a time when we are welcoming the conclusion of the first stage of the analysis of the options available for tackling it from a conflict-prevention perspective.

In conclusion, despite the great challenges facing this region, we urge UNOWAS to continue working together with regional and international partners to implement joint solutions to ensure peace and stability, stimulate sustainable and inclusive economic growth and establish the conditions necessary for a better life.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.