



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8497th meeting

Friday, 29 March 2019, 2.30 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Le Drian (France)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Amon-Tanoh
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
Germany	Mr. Maas
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	Lord Ahmad
United States of America	Mr. Hale

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018) (S/2019/207)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2019/262)

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The meeting was called to order at 2.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018) (S/2019/207)

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2019/262)

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Prime Minister of Mali, Ministers of Germany, Côte d'Ivoire and the United Kingdom, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the United States of America and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council Chamber. Their presence today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Soumeylou Boubéye Maïga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

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/2019/207, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018) and document S/2019/262, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council. I welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Maïga.

We have all been shocked by the recent surge in violence in central Mali, particularly the killing last weekend of at least 160 civilians in the village of

Ogossagou in Mopti province. It appears to have been a premeditated massacre, in which whole families, including mothers and young children, were hacked to death with machetes in their homes, which were then set on fire. And while it may be the worst attack so far, it is not the first. I want to express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and the people of Mali, and I wish the injured a speedy recovery.

Impunity only fuels the cycle of violence. This attack must be investigated urgently and its perpetrators brought to justice. I urge the Malian authorities to step up efforts to end the violence and bring back peace and stability to central Mali. But as these attacks become deadlier and more frequent, we must decide what the international community can do to better support the Malian authorities and protect all of Mali's people, including the Fulani, who were targeted in the massacre.

The security situation is deteriorating rapidly, particularly in the centre of Mali. Terrorist and militia groups are taking over more territory and have become more agile and mobile. The expansion of extremist movements has exacerbated long-standing intercommunal tensions between ethnic groups over access to land and water. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the arming of ethnically based self-defence groups have increased violence against civilians. If those concerns are not addressed, there is a high risk of further escalation that could lead to the commission of atrocity crimes. Last year there were more than 240 attacks on civilians, representatives of the Malian Government and national and international forces, up from 183 in 2016. The number of people forced to flee their homes increased from 40,000 a year ago to 123,000 in February 2019, and cases of the use of improvised explosive devices in central Mali more than tripled, from 29 in 2017 to nearly 100 in 2018.

We owe Special Representative Mahamat Saleh Annadif and his military and civilian staff our gratitude for the work they are doing in this extremely challenging and dangerous mission. Eighteen Blue Helmets from Chad, Guinea and Sri Lanka lost their lives in Mali in the past 18 months. I want to express my deepest condolences to their families and friends, but their sacrifice will not be in vain. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has enhanced its capacity to respond to attacks, even when heavily outnumbered. But as extremists expand their activities and use increasingly

sophisticated weapons, the Malian and international forces must also step up and strengthen their response.

MINUSMA works in close coordination with the Malian defence and security forces and the international forces present in Mali — the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the French Operation Barkhane. I welcome the recent operations led by Barkhane and the G-5 Sahel, and the Council is aware of my view of what is needed to make the Joint Force fully operational.

(spoke in English)

While the security situation is deteriorating, there have been some important steps in the past six months towards accelerating the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. More than 1,400 former combatants in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu have joined the Malian army as part of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, which is an important sign of commitment. Interim administrations have been established in all five northern regions. Discussions on enhancing the participation of women in the peace process are under way. The Government has launched a comprehensive political and administrative reform process laying the groundwork for dialogue on how Mali's institutions can best serve the interests of its people. I encourage the Government to promote reconciliation and intercommunal dialogue, aimed at ensuring inclusivity, strengthening resilience and creating social cohesion from the ground up.

I welcome efforts by the Government to make this process as broad as possible by including political leaders from across the spectrum, the signatory movements and armed groups, experts and members of civil society. The recent meetings initiated by President Keita with the leaders of the democratic opposition, including Soumaïla Cissé, show a willingness on both sides to rise above partisan politics and support the reforms. I urge all Malian parties to redouble their efforts, address differences through dialogue and listen to the voices of the Malian people, so that those gains can be irreversible. I also urge the international community to continue its support.

While we must do more to support the Malian authorities and improve security across the whole country, military approaches alone will not solve Mali's problems. We can only prevent increased violence and instability by tackling root causes such

as poverty, climate change, competition for resources, underdevelopment and the lack of opportunities for young people. Some 2.4 million people in Mali need food assistance. There are just three health workers for every 10,000 people in the northern and central regions. More than 800 schools have been closed and nearly a quarter of a million children have no access to education.

MINUSMA and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have now adopted an integrated strategic framework that will help to prioritize tasks and define responsibilities to support broader and longer-term sustaining peace efforts by the Malian Government. There are several important international initiatives under way, including the Alliance for the Sahel, launched by France, Germany and the European Union, which aims to invest €9 billion across the region by 2022. The G-5 Sahel held a successful partner and donor conference in Nouakchott in December. While I welcome such initiatives, they are insufficient. I call upon all to strengthen efforts to address the root causes of instability and insecurity in Mali through humanitarian aid and support for sustainable development, including programmes on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The situation in Mali is a test of the international community's ability to mobilize in support of peace and stability. That is not a question of charity. It is one of enlightened self-interest. Security in Mali has an impact on the entire Sahel, which in turn affects global stability. The entire Sahel region faces severe transnational challenges, from climate change and drought to growing insecurity, violent extremism and the smuggling of people, weapons and drugs. The Council is aware of the growing threat to stability in Burkina Faso. We cannot stand by while the humanitarian situation deteriorates, development gaps increase and security risks become unsustainable. I call on all national, regional and international actors to step up efforts to tackle the multiple threats facing Mali and the entire Sahel region. Investing in peace in Mali is investing in global security.

I urge our continued full support to MINUSMA, the United Nations humanitarian and development agencies and all partners on the ground. However, that support will never be sufficient. There is no substitute for political will. I call on the Government of Mali, the leaders of the political opposition and the signatory movements to redouble their efforts to overcome the

challenges the country faces. Now is the time to work together to bring back peace and stability to Mali.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and for being with us for today's discussion on such an important issue.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

First of all, I too would like to say a few words as a tribute to the villagers who were massacred on Saturday in Ogossagou in a reprehensible, cowardly attack. That tragic incident reminds us that we must take action to support Mali. France firmly condemns the attack. I call on authorities to do their utmost to find and prosecute those responsible for that horrendous crime and to disarm the militia groups that are sowing fear in central Mali. Such attacks are a betrayal of Mali's tradition of secularism and tolerance.

The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was finalized in Algiers in 2015. We meet today to assess its implementation and to underscore the critical role being played on the ground by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The agreement involves all stakeholders in seeking a settlement to the conflict. The peacekeeping mission tasked with supporting the process and other security forces deployed in the country to shore up stabilization and development efforts are two key components of the peace process in Mali.

The peace process has accelerated over the past six months — and it was high time. Last June, Council members raised the alarm about the persistent delays in implementing the main provisions of the agreement, expressed their impatience and called on all Malian parties to make a genuine and spirited effort. The Council set specific goals in resolution 2423 (2018), encouraging the Government and signatory armed groups to reach them within six months of the President's inauguration. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/262) provides an overview of efforts in that regard and gives a clear idea of the progress made and of the work that remains to be done. The facts are clear and can be verified. The spirited effort sought by the Security Council was made. Presidential elections took place in satisfactory security conditions, even in northern Mali. At this juncture, I would like to commend the decisive efforts of MINUSMA to support

the elections, as well as the resumption of the national dialogue between the authorities and the opposition.

The security mechanisms outlined in the agreement have gradually become stronger in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, bringing together hundreds of soldiers from the Malian army in those three areas and combatants from the signatory armed groups and launching the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process. With the return of a few deserters, nearly 2,000 members of those groups have already laid down their weapons and will join the Malian army following a period of training. The fact that former rebels are now poised to join the national army attests to the progress made and demonstrates the growing trust among the parties. It is a major step forward that should not be underestimated.

Consultations on a reconstituted army are under way, thanks to agreement among the Malian parties on the criteria for the integration of combatants, which were announced in a decree signed in early March. The establishment of a counter-terrorism unit, as called for in the peace agreement, has also been planned. The decentralization process is also under way in Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu. New interim administrations have been installed at the regional and district levels and financial and human resources are gradually being transferred. An important decree was issued a month ago for the transfer of competent services. With regard to development, a trust fund has been set up and legislation to create a development zone in the north of the country is under consideration.

To date, the level of women's participation in the peace process has been negligible but is now on the rise. Prime Minister Maïga's Government now includes 11 women, in line with goal set by Malian legislation. Women have also been appointed to posts within the interim authorities and, with the help of MINUSMA, a greater number of women will be involved in the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

Lastly, the parties are engaged in regular dialogue with greater trust, in particular thanks to the new Ministry of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation. I commend its head, Minister Bouaré.

I congratulate the Malian authorities, President Keita and Prime Minister Maïga, whose presence here today demonstrates the importance he attaches to the agreement. I commend his efforts. I also commend all parties to the peace process, who have managed

to find the resources and determination needed to demonstrate that spirited effort. Today, however, that effort must continue and be sustainable. We expect all parties to pursue their efforts. The DDR process must be completed and the establishment and redeployment of reconstituted units must occur in accordance with a precise timetable. Decentralization must continue following inclusive consultations and, on the ground, development must be achieved to the benefit of the people.

With regard to development, I recall that France and Germany are determined to take action in the region, working alongside our partners in the Alliance for the Sahel. The time for inaction and the status quo is behind us. All parties must honour their obligations and, if necessary, new sanctions should be envisaged for those who might hinder the implementation of the agreement. To confirm the Council's determination, new designations may be required under the sanctions regime established by resolution 2374 (2017).

I would like to inform our Malian friends that the attention of the Security Council shall not flag. We will set new specific goals to implement the agreement that will be based on specific criteria and, if possible, accepted by all Malian parties. I encourage them to work to develop a new road map that takes into account the progress already made and the work that remains to be done, as a token of their renewed commitment to the implementation of the agreement. The Security Council resolution that will renew the MINUSMA mandate in June could be used to formalize those goals.

MINUSMA has played a decisive role in helping the Malian parties to make considerable progress. I underscore the outstanding work done by Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali. I also commend the commitment of all its civilian and military components and pay tribute to the soldiers who have died in service of peace in a demanding and dangerous mission. MINUSMA is making every effort to adapt to operational needs and to the dynamics of the peace process by securing the launch of the DDR process in northern Mali.

It has also demonstrated its responsiveness to the deterioration of the security situation in the centre, where circumstances require resolute action to put an end to the violence. Let us be clear — the primary responsibility for stabilization must be assumed by the Malian authorities, but we must also note that

MINUSMA is the only international presence in that region and the one best able to support the efforts of the Malian authorities.

With troops from Operation Barkhane, France will continue to support the Mission, as often and as long as necessary. Not long ago, we provided air support in attacks on the Timbuktu, Ber and Aguelhok camps, and when necessary, Operation Barkhane's health service cares for peacekeepers wounded in combat. These examples show that, both operationally and logistically, MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing in the performance of their respective functions and missions. While each has its own mandate and stance, it shares the same objective — the implementation of the peace agreement.

Thanks to the stabilization efforts of MINUSMA, its support for intercommunity reconciliation and the redeployment of the State in the centre of the country, Operation Barkhane can now focus on counter-terrorism and combat the territorial control of jihadist armed groups. This is a long-term and difficult mission, but, as Council members know, we have already achieved significant victories recently.

A new dynamic has begun in the implementation of the peace agreement. Six months after the inauguration of President Keita, we can only welcome this momentum. Without the support of MINUSMA, this process could not have begun or continued today. I am pleased to see that we are moving in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go, whether it is in the political, security or development field, whether it is for the Malian parties or in terms of international support. I think it is now important for everyone to pursue their efforts in this direction in a concerted and coherent way.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Maas (Germany): I am pleased to participate in today's important Security Council debate under the leadership of French Foreign Minister Le Drian. Sitting next to him here in the Council underlines how closely France and Germany are working together as Council members in advancing multilateralism and cooperating on the ground, for example in Mali.

I was reminded of how important that is during my visit to Mali a few weeks ago. I vividly remember a discussion I had with young people in Gao. They told me about how they fought to resist Islamist terrorism in 2013. They also talked about how they have been working to promote peace since then. They did not allow their freedom, including the freedom of thought, to be taken away. How did they find the courage to do this? “Because it is our country”, they told me. To me, this was encouraging, because it is the women and men of Mali who hold the key to a peaceful future for their country. That is why I am very pleased that Prime Minister Maïga has joined us today for this important discussion.

The road to peace and reconciliation is long. Even though Malian leadership plays a critical role, Mali will continue to need international support as it travels down that road. It will need the Security Council right by its side. Our message today is that the Council is ready to support it. The Council underlined this fact with its trip to Mali and Burkina Faso the last week, which was organized by Germany, France and Côte d’Ivoire. The European Union is ready to continue training and supporting the Malian security forces.

Our support to Mali is provided thanks to the civilian staff, police officers and soldiers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), who often serve at great risk to their lives. I heard first-hand how dangerous the mission is from the women and men in uniform whom I met in Gao. They are doing a fantastic job, and we are all most grateful to all of them. The work of MINUSMA deserves our full support. MINUSMA needs a strong and comprehensive mandate. Germany will continue to work in the Security Council towards this end. We are prepared to continue to participate in MINUSMA with our largest Blue Helmet contingent. Germany stands shoulder to shoulder with Mali and its people.

The terrible massacre that took place last week near Mopti demonstrated how great the threat still is. More than 160 people were killed, including many women and children. The perpetrators of this despicable crime must be brought to justice. It should remind all of us how important it is to do everything possible to improve the security situation.

Regional cooperation in the Sahel region also remains important because many of the challenges do not stop at national borders. We call upon the Group

of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to rapidly make the Joint Force fully operational, which is an effort being supported by Germany and the European Union. In addition, MINUSMA should continue to play an important role in supporting the G-5 Sahel.

No matter how much MINUSMA is helping to provide stability in Mali, a peace mission cannot replace the political process. It is therefore very important that the Government has set important reforms in motion. The Secretary-General is right to point out in his report (S/2019/262) that the peace process has recently gained new momentum. The demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of former fighters are making progress. Work on reforming the Constitution has gotten under way. These reforms must steadily continue, and the upcoming parliamentary elections are another important step.

But something else is needed as well. To have truly lasting peace, it must be ensured that human rights are respected, women play a major role in the peace process, the different social groups and regions in Mali are brought together, State structures are built up everywhere in the country, and economic opportunities are created, especially for young people. This is a tremendous task, but I am convinced that it can be done because Mali has a great advantage — it has a strong and vibrant civil society, and it has young people who believe in the future of Mali and who, in the face of many difficulties, have decided to stay and build a future for themselves because it is their country. These people need our support, and I believe they deserve it.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d’Ivoire.

Mr. Amon-Tanoh (Côte d’Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I take the floor at an open meeting of the Security Council under the French presidency, I am pleased to congratulate your country, Mr. President, and to express Côte d’Ivoire’s appreciation for the smooth conduct of the Council’s work and for the well-chosen topics addressed.

I extend my warm and fraternal greetings to His Excellency Mr. Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali; Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and His Excellency the Minister of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation. Their presence here today is sufficient proof of commitment at the highest level of the Malian State to working

in concert with the United Nations and partners to strengthen peace and security in Mali.

I also welcome the presence of my brother His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Burkina Abroad, whose commitment to the cause of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is well known by all. I reiterate my sympathy to him.

Similarly, I welcome the presence of His Excellency the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, and congratulate him in advance on the German presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. Lastly, I welcome all the Ministers who grace us with their presence at this meeting.

I would also like to commend Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of Secretary-General for Mali, and his team for the multifaceted efforts undertaken by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), in support of the peace process in the country, in accordance with resolution 2423 (2018).

My delegation welcomes the holding of this meeting, which once again demonstrates France's interest in the restoration of peace and security in Mali and the West African subregion. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the quality of his reports (S/2018/207 and S/2019/262) and the interest to which they give rise. It prompts Côte d'Ivoire to make observations on the political, security and humanitarian situations in Mali, as well as on the activities of MINUSMA in an increasingly difficult context, which invites us to make important adjustments in our collective response to the situation in Mali.

At the political level, Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the Secretary-General's assessment of the initiatives undertaken by the Malian parties with a view to implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. It therefore welcomes the creation of the Ministry of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation, an important institutional tool that shows the Malian Government's concern to intensify the coordination of Government action in the operationalization of the aforementioned agreement. In that regard, my country encourages Malian political actors and civil society to further pool their efforts with a view to creating the conditions for a rapid and lasting return of peace, security and stability to Mali, particularly in the northern and central regions.

The Pact for Peace, signed on 15 October 2018, provides an encouraging and positive response on the part of the Malian authorities to the expectations of our Council and the international community. It also reflects their commitment to a more inclusive peace process. The commitment of the signatory armed groups to joining an accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, as well as the integration of the elements of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, are all encouraging signals.

My country therefore welcomes the launch, on 6 November 2018, of the accelerated ad hoc DDR process, which has enabled the integration of combatants from the Operational Coordination Mechanism into the security system of the Republic. The security sector reform process should also be expedited. That is key to reducing violence and creating an army of the Republic of Mali, a crucial instrument in the service of peace and stability.

We remain convinced that the Malian authorities will be able to capitalize on the positive momentum of the presidential elections to organize the upcoming legislative elections, in accordance with their ongoing concern to strengthen the anchoring of democracy in their country.

Ensuring a successful end to the crisis in Mali is everyone's business. It is essential that the efforts of local stakeholders enjoy the ongoing support of the international community, in particular the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the independent observer, who must all maintain their level of mobilization in support of peacebuilding in Mali and the subregion.

On the security front, my country shares the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General about the prevailing situation, particularly in the northern and central regions of Mali, where attacks by extremist groups and recurrent episodes of intercommunal violence are upsetting the social balance that is the foundation for peaceful coexistence among populations. Those attacks also undermine the stability of neighbouring countries, such as the Niger and Burkina Faso, to which I reiterate Côte d'Ivoire's condolences and compassion. The fight against terrorism and organized cross-border crime is therefore a regional security issue. It requires a collective response and coordination of the efforts of all actors.

In Mali itself, the latest act of outrageous violence was the deadly attack perpetrated on 23 March against vulnerable civilians in the village of Ogossagou, in the centre of the country, where 160 people, mainly defenceless women, children and elderly people, were systematically massacred. Those killings, and many others before them, require our Council to take urgent measures to support the redeployment of the police and judicial institutions, which should enable the Malian State to fully discharge its sovereign functions. We welcome the decision of the Government of Mali to expedite an investigation to shed light on those crimes, find the perpetrators of those heinous acts and bring them to justice. That initiative must be supported by the United Nations.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the joint efforts of the G-5 Sahel member States and international donors, which made it possible, at the conference held in Nouakchott on 6 December 2018, to mobilize €2.4 billion to finance the 40 key projects included in the 2019-2020 Priority Investment Programme.

In that regard, my country reaffirms its conviction that the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is of crucial importance to the effective fight against terrorism and the restoration of peace and stability in the subregion. It therefore calls on the international community, in particular the United Nations and international financial partners, to work together to provide the Force with the necessary resources for its action as soon as possible. That also requires a review of the technical agreement, which defines the modalities for MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force.

Turning now to the worrying humanitarian crisis, which, according to the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/262), could affect 7.2 million people in 2019, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the assistance that has been provided by specialized agencies. It invites the international community to show greater solidarity and mobilization to provide emergency relief to populations in distress. We remain convinced that multifaceted responses to humanitarian challenges should be part and parcel of an integrated approach to promoting economic development, including the fight against poverty and unemployment, which are the root causes of insecurity and instability in Africa. That is a welcome development for the launch of the Alliance for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, which aim to intensify and better coordinate support to States of the region in their development efforts.

With regard to MINUSMA — an essential link in the current security system in Mali and the subregion — my country believes that it must undeniably enjoy the ongoing support of our Council. Indeed, the complementarity of its actions with those of the various forces involved — including the Malian armed forces, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, Operation Barkhane and the European missions — constitute a considerable asset in the fight against terrorism and organized crime throughout the subregion. It is therefore imperative to ensure that its capacities are strengthened in order to enable it to react effectively to or anticipate attacks against its civilian and military personnel. To that end, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the fact that its readiness to contribute more to peacekeeping operations has been materialized by the Secretary-General's decision to deploy a contingent of 650 Ivorian soldiers to MINUSMA's area of operations in the near future, in addition to the 150 soldiers already present on the ground.

Our debate is taking place in a worrisome regional security context, characterized by the unprecedented proliferation of terrorist groups, the worsening of intercommunal conflicts and the alarming growth of a structured criminal economy and trafficking of all kinds, which undermine the foundations of our States. There are many worrying signals, and we in the Council must go further and be pragmatic in our support for the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and West Africa. Today more than ever, MINUSMA needs a regional secular arm with a coercive mandate in the fight against terrorist groups in order to effectively implement its peacekeeping mandate. That is the thrust of President Alassane Ouattara's ongoing appeal for the resolute commitment of the major countries and the United Nations, in particular our Council, to benefit the G-5 Sahel, which is designed with a view to the long term.

In that regard, the Côte d'Ivoire appeals to the Council for unity and to the international community for continued mobilization in support of MINUSMA's mandate, which is more necessary now than ever before, as well as for its logistical and operational support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017).

In conclusion, my country urges the Council to strengthen its support for the Government of Mali in its efforts to restore peace and stability and promote economic and social development.

Mr. Hale (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and Secretary-General Guterres for today's briefing. I also wish to thank the representatives of France, Germany and Côte d'Ivoire for coordinating the recent Security Council trip to Mali and Burkina Faso. Council members witnessed first hand the security and political challenges in both countries. A frank dialogue about the realities of the situation will enable the Council to help advance peace and security and improve the lives of the people of the region.

The Council must recognize the gravity of the security situation in Mali. While the troops of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) wear blue helmets, they find themselves in an environment far outside the bounds of traditional peacekeeping. MINUSMA peacekeepers are consistently and purposefully attacked by extremists who are mobile, smart, well organized and not about to give up. MINUSMA has suffered as a result. MINUSMA is the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world and has borne an unprecedented rate of casualties. Too many peacekeepers have been killed or had their lives, and those of their families, shattered by life-altering injuries. America honours their sacrifices and offers its gratitude and appreciation to the troops, police and civilians of MINUSMA, along with their families, who sacrifice daily to promote peace and stability in Mali.

That violence, together with increasing intercommunal and inter-ethnic violence, particularly in Mali's centre, is accompanied by an unacceptable lack of progress in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. In resolution 2423 (2018), the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General deliver a special report on progress in implementing seven key provisions of the agreement. The Council requested the Secretary-General to provide recommendations for significant adaptations of MINUSMA's mandate in the absence of significant progress on those benchmarks. The 5 March report (S/2019/207) notes some progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), and the successful conduct of Mali's 2018 presidential election. However, we are disappointed that the report does not provide a clear assessment of the lack of significant progress on all remaining items. That gap contrasts with the independent observer's report, which

acknowledge preliminary progress but sounds the alarm on the lack of political will to implement the accord.

Given the gravity of the situation in Mali, we have made clear to all parties our disappointment at the lack of significant progress, with only one of seven benchmarks fully completed. Now is not the time to give up, nor is it the time to pretend that peace in Mali is advancing sufficiently. We expect to see progress on the outstanding measures before the Security Council negotiates the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate in June. In particular, we will carefully review progress and seek completion in three areas.

First, Mali should expand the inclusivity of the constitutional reform process, leading to a legitimate constitutional referendum. That step is key to the viability of the agreement and the future of Mali beyond MINUSMA. The armed groups, opposition and civil society must have input into an inclusive process. Secondly, the parties to the Algiers accord should accelerate the integration, training and deployment of fighters participating in the DDR programme in northern Mali. Thirdly, the Government should codify the northern development zone into law and provide greater resources to interim administrations in the north. The Government should ensure that interim administrations are not merely token presences, but can actually deliver services. Inclusivity and transparent political progress have been delayed for far too long.

While we have focused on the north, security in the centre of Mali is also deteriorating. In the first few months of this year, we have witnessed just how precarious things have become, with, as previous speakers have noted, the deaths of more than 160 people just this past Saturday, the loss of 23 soldiers in the Diourra attack and continuing threats to civilians. United Nations agencies are now reporting that in the first two months of 2019, 70 per cent of human rights violations and 80 per cent of civilian deaths in Mali occurred in the centre of the country. The Government and MINUSMA are responsible for protecting civilians throughout the entire country, not just in the north. We are encouraged by the changes that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Annadif and Force Commander Gyllensporre have made since last year's mandate. They are strong leaders whose teams have focused the Mission on its core mandate and made it more integrated and effective.

No matter how valiant their efforts are, however, MINUSMA cannot fill the gap while the Government and parties to the Algiers accord fail to make progress in its implementation, and the Council has tried during MINUSMA's six years to get the Mission to perform optimally and minimize risks to peacekeepers. The inability of the parties to make significant progress after signing the 2015 Mali peace agreement has inhibited the Mission's ability to implement the mandate. That failing has put civilians, peacekeepers and domestic and international forces at greater risk from terrorism as communal violence has spread throughout the region. Despite some progress in the past several months, and after only modest progress in prior years, it is time to evaluate whether a peacekeeping mission in such an environment is the appropriate or effective solution to the problem set in northern Mali.

In determining MINUSMA's future, we ask the Secretary-General to proceed with the Council's request, outlined in paragraph six of resolution 2423 (2018), to provide us with options for a significant adaptation of MINUSMA in time for the negotiation of its mandate this June. Six of the seven benchmarks have not been completed, and most have seen no significant progress. We ask for a plan that positions MINUSMA to address the security and counter-terrorism environment, protect personnel and support political progress more effectively than at present. The plan should include options for significant adaptation so that the Council can consider the best way forward in such a precarious environment. The plan should outline options to address the significant instability in Mali's centre.

Turning to Mali itself, inclusive constitutional change will require tremendous political courage and significant input from all concerned. Inclusive constitutional reform will result in more voices being heard in Mali's institutions, the decentralization of power and genuine political dialogue, which are all important steps towards re-establishing security and governance throughout the country. We call on Mali's leaders to work together towards achieving real and lasting power-sharing. Progress will benefit the region, but above all else it will benefit the people of Mali. Only by building a bridge between Mali's diverse communities will leaders pave a road leading towards a more secure future for all — a road upon which there will be opportunity and a more prosperous future for Mali and its people.

Lord Ahmad (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting and the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative briefing. Like many others, I am also looking forward to hearing Prime Minister Maïga give his perspective on the challenges that his country faces. However, I would like to begin by addressing the Prime Minister, on behalf of the United Kingdom Government, by offering our sincere condolences for the tragic deaths of more than 160 people in the most recent violence in Ogossagou. Given the ongoing security challenges, we particularly welcome the recent steps that his Government has taken to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, including on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Nevertheless, while progress in recent months has been more encouraging than in previous years, the United Kingdom notes that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/207) highlights a number of areas in which progress has not matched the benchmarks set out in the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). It is clear that more still needs to be done to ensure that Mali is able to achieve long-term peace and stability.

Even where positive steps have been taken, more fundamental changes are required to achieve peace, sustainable development and prosperity. That is particularly the case with constitutional reform, decentralization, security sector reform, economic development in northern Mali and the meaningful participation of women in the peace process. I commend the Government of Mali's commitment to holding a constitutional referendum before the end of June. In order to give the reform process the best chance of success, we would urge the Government to ensure that it is properly inclusive, involving genuine consultations with all signatory parties to the peace agreement and all sectors of Malian society. We also welcome the Prime Minister's clear commitment to stabilizing the situation in central Mali. We hope that he can give assurances that the Government's plan will be both truly comprehensive and properly funded, in order to ensure its effectiveness.

MINUSMA plays a crucial role in Mali in extremely challenging circumstances. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns the recent attacks on MINUSMA personnel, and we would like to express our condolences to the families of those who lost their

lives. As we approach the June renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, the United Kingdom wants to work with everyone here today to build on recent progress and further enhance the effectiveness of the Mission. In particular, we want to see a mandate that enables it to continue to focus on its core task in the north and its areas of strength. MINUSMA has had the greatest political impact when it has used its good offices to defuse tensions and enable agreement to form around the tough compromises necessary. Those compromises are absolutely essential to peace, and we believe that the Mission can do more in that area, particularly in central Mali.

Where MINUSMA's military operations are concerned, we are worried about the fact that the Mission still spends too much time and money on resupply and force protection rather than protecting the Malian people. We want to support the Mission in making longer-term cost savings so that it can free up capacity, because that is crucial to saving lives. Finally, we should all recognize that MINUSMA is not a permanent solution but a means to an end, which is the achievement of sustainable peace in Mali. We all need to work together across the whole United Nations family to achieve that.

I want to conclude by underlining the importance that the United Kingdom attaches to progress in Mali and the broader Sahel region. The issues that we are discussing here today have major long-term implications not only for the security and prosperity of the people of Mali but also for the broader region and, indeed, for Europe. That is why the United Kingdom is stepping up its engagement in the Sahel. We already work with countries of the region to support peace, development and prosperity. We are the region's third largest humanitarian donor. We are enlarging our Embassy in Mali, which spearheads our work on the very issues that we have been discussing so far today. We are also establishing new embassies in the Niger and Chad and building a broader stability and development programme. As we step up our engagement over the coming years, the principles of frank and open partnership will be central to our approach, both with the people and Governments of the region and with our broader international partners. I look forward to working with many here, the Government of Mali and all partners to achieve our shared ambitions and our shared goals.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome Prime Minister Soumeylou Maïga of Mali to today's meeting and thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing.

At the outset, we would like to express our condolences to the Government and the people of Mali regarding the horrific tragedy in the village of Ogossagou, where more than 160 peaceful residents were killed as a result of an inter-ethnic clash on 23 March. We wish all the wounded a speedy recovery and hope that those responsible for what happened will be found and duly punished. This tragic event, which occurred while the Security Council mission was visiting the country, demonstrated once again the size and gravity of the threats facing the country and the region, as well as their vulnerability to the proliferation of destabilizing forces represented by terrorists, organized criminals and ideological extremists.

In general, we share the views that the Secretary-General expressed today and in his two reports for March on the situation in Mali (S/2019/207 and S/2019/262). We welcome the efforts of Bamako, Malian political stakeholders and the Platform coalition and Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad signatory groups to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We hope that the existing positive momentum in implementing its key provisions with regard to the reconstitution of Mali's security forces, administrative and territorial reforms and the preparations for a constitutional referendum will continue. Ensuring that the parliamentary elections scheduled for June are held on time would be an important step towards strengthening Mali's internal dialogue. The international community should prioritize those issues in providing assistance to the country.

While recognizing the obvious positive developments in Mali's peace process, we cannot ignore other trends there that are unfortunately less encouraging. In a situation where there is no Government control in large parts of the country, it should be no surprise that those areas are becoming ideal breeding grounds for extremist activities. We have seen that the number of terrorist attacks on both military personnel and civilians has increased in recent months. There are human rights violations everywhere. In central Mali inter-ethnic and intercommunal conflicts are not just simmering but increasingly often are full-on erupting. It seems that the issue here is not merely the centuries-old differences between herders and farmers.

Militants are intentionally trying to gain the support of local residents by providing protection and basic services and by skilfully playing on existing disputes. If those challenges are to be dealt with, the presence of State authority must be restored. However, we should not fail to point to the results that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has achieved in reconciling the warring parties.

The worsening humanitarian situation is extremely worrying. The numbers of those in need of assistance are growing. We urge all external donors to fund the humanitarian appeal as quickly as possible. We all know that when the situation seems hopeless, Mali's young people have no option but to join the ranks of terrorist, extremist or criminal groups. In that regard, it will be crucial to ensure that the efforts to stimulate economic activity and restore social services in the central and northern areas do not let up.

The situation in Mali is an important factor in African security as a whole. However, it is very unlikely that peace can be achieved there without normalizing the situation in the region. The Libya factor continues to play a negative role in this. The links between the terrorists operating in Mali and in the region as a whole are becoming increasingly clear. In that regard, we support the concrete steps that the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel have been taking to form a joint force to combat terrorism and organized crime, and we hope that their role in ensuring regional security will increase.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his very informative briefing on the recent developments in Mali and welcoming Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga of Mali. I want to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to the Prime Minister as well as to the families of the victims of the tragedy in Ogossagou. I would like to focus today on three issues — the political process, the security situation and the human rights and humanitarian situation.

First, on the political process, we commend the commitment shown by President Keita and his Government to prioritizing the constitutional review process. It is an indispensable step towards adopting the critical political and institutional reforms envisaged in the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We therefore call on all Malian political and civil-society leaders to participate actively in those important

deliberations and contribute constructively to them. Ensuring an inclusive and transparent constitutional review process is of the utmost importance. Despite some positive developments, we regret that some of the key provisions of the agreement have not yet been fully implemented. There is no doubt that the implementation of the agreement requires strong dedication and commitment from all the relevant stakeholders. Those who are trying to obstruct the process should be aware that the Council is ready to impose all the necessary measures against them, pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017).

Secondly, we remain grievously concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in central Mali and the alarming increase in the number of civilians killed. Saturday's horrific massacre in Ogossagou, in the Mopti region, is the latest sign that violence in Mali is spiralling out of control. We therefore call on the Government to intensify efforts to address the situation in the centre of the country with the support of the international community, including through implementing its Plan de sécurisation intégré des régions du centre. We strongly condemn attacks against civilians in the village of Koulogon-Peul and call for the perpetrators to be held accountable. For the situation in Mali to improve, the effective implementation of the peace agreement is crucial. We express our deep condolences to the families of the victims.

It goes without saying that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) plays a critical role in preventing extremist armed groups from taking control of areas in northern Mali where there is little or no State authority. However, the recent Security Council visit to the region shows clearly that the current situation is extremely difficult and that there is a need to create a broader security architecture, which includes MINUSMA, the Malian armed forces, the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force and Operation Barkhane deployed to the region.

Thirdly, the human rights situation remains worrisome, particularly in the centre of the country, as well as in the Ménaka region and the Gourma area, where serious human rights violations and abuses continue to be reported. No effort should be spared to bring the perpetrators of those heinous acts to justice. At the same time, all national and international military forces operating in Mali must ensure that their

operations comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Access to basic services and assistance, such as food, water and sanitation, as well as education and health care, remain limited and challenging. As the number of displaced persons in Mali grows, it is of the utmost importance to step up efforts to address that difficult situation.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that peace and stability in Mali remains key for the peace and security of the whole Sahel region. But Malians alone cannot achieve those ambitious goals. Poland therefore applauds Special Representative Mahamet Saleh Annadif for his excellent leadership, and all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel for their continued hard work in a challenging environment. Last but not least, we commend the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and other bilateral and multilateral partners for their commitment and valuable support for the peace process in Mali.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this meeting and the Secretary-General's valuable briefing. We are honoured by the presence of the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany, and also welcome the Prime Minister of Mali to this important meeting.

The Security Council visited Mali a week ago, where we were able to observe the progress made in the country at the political level. We were also able to learn at first-hand about the delicate humanitarian situation and the continuing deterioration in security due to the increase in terrorism and organized crime.

Peru believes that the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali must remain the priority for the Government and the people of Mali, with the support of the international community. The establishment of provisional authorities; the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process; the reintegration of approximately 1,400 combatants; and the efforts to achieve development in the north of the country are achievements that reflect the will of the parties to implement the agreement.

Despite those achievements, much remains to be done. It is essential that all parties join efforts to ensure that the progress achieved is reflected in an improvement of the living conditions for all Malian

citizens. To that end, we consider it necessary, first of all, to work without delay on the reforms relating to the revision of the Constitution and decentralization, as well as on the holding of peaceful, transparent and inclusive legislative elections to be held in June. We welcome the establishment of the committee of experts on the constitutional review and the national consultation framework. We encourage all parties to work on the necessary reforms in an inclusive manner so as to enhance social cohesion.

Secondly, we must address the constant security deterioration, the continuing violence and the critical humanitarian situation in various parts of the country, particularly in central Mali. We regret that at least 134 civilians, including women and children, were killed in an attack in Mopti in the course of our visit. We support the efforts made to strengthen the armed forces, which rely on the trust and backing of the people, in order to equip them with the technical skills and training that will enable them to confront terrorist and rebel groups.

It is equally important to combat inter-ethnic, intercommunal and religious violence among the communities in the centre of the country through dialogue initiatives at the local level. It is key to complement those actions with an independent judicial system capable of investigating and prosecuting human rights violations, while contributing to accountability and the fight against impunity.

Thirdly, we must continue to work to eliminate economic and development inequality between the capital, Bamako, and the other regions of the country. Bringing about sustainable peace will be possible only through a comprehensive approach that includes improvements in security, political dialogue and the rule of law as essential prerequisites for addressing the root causes of the conflict. In that process, it is crucial to promote measures to ensure increased participation and empowerment of women and young people, which is key to defining and building the future of the country.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that, in order to achieve stability in Mali, the various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed on the ground must maintain political and operational coherence. We especially recognize the work being done by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in a particularly difficult operational environment. We support the provision of the necessary resources and capacities to enable it to

carry out its mandate effectively in the best possible security conditions.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I welcome Foreign Minister Le Drian to the Security Council to preside over today's meeting. I also welcome Prime Minister Maïga and thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

An outbreak of violence in central Mali on 23 March claimed 160 lives. China strongly condemns that violence and we would like to express our condolences and sympathy to the Government and the people of Mali and the families of the victims.

Last year witnessed the successful conclusion of a general election in Mali and a peaceful transition of Government. The peace process in Mali has registered positive progress since President Keita began his new term in September. Prime Minister Maïga has been engaging extensively with the parties and has made important contributions to that end. China commends the Malian Government and people for their tireless efforts in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. At the same time, we note that the security situation in the north and centre of the country continues to deteriorate. Terrorist activities are rampant. Serious issues such as poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment are undermining the peace process. The international community should continue to provide support for peace and development in Mali.

First, it is important to intensify efforts to advance the peace and reconciliation process in Mali. China hopes that all parties to the Malian peace agreement will consolidate the current positive momentum, continue to strengthen mutual trust and put the interests of the country and its people first, while making a joint commitment to the development and reconstruction of the country. The international community should provide assistance and capacity-building in the areas of autonomous development and governance on the basis of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The sanctions regime for Mali should aim to support the political process and strictly adhere to the mandate entrusted to it by the Council.

Secondly, we should help Mali to enhance its capacity-building in the area of security. In response to the increasingly complex security challenges in the north and centre of Mali, the international community should continue to support and help the Malian Government

to improve its of security and counter-terrorism, as requested by the Malian Government, so that it can gradually assume greater security responsibilities throughout its territory. Peace and security in Mali is closely related to the overall security situation in the surrounding areas, which calls for an integrated approach to international cooperation against terrorism in Mali and neighbouring areas.

China acknowledges the progress made by the Malian Government and its security forces in assuming security responsibilities on the ground and welcomes the initiative of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in tackling security threats in the region, such as terrorism. We commend the United Nations and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for their support of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

Thirdly, we should support the economic and social development of Mali. The international community should continue to step up its support to Mali with a view to consolidating its economy and achieving autonomous, sustainable development at an early date. That will help Mali to address the underlying problems that it faces. China calls on all the relevant parties to follow through on their aid commitments so as to ease the financial pressure on the Government. The appointment of heads of the interim administration in the north of the country was completed a few days ago. China welcomes that development and hopes that the relevant processes can be advanced so that basic services can soon be provided to the people in the north of the country and so that living conditions improve.

Fourthly, it is imperative to support MINUSMA in continuing its work. The Mission and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, have played an important role in maintaining stability in Mali, strengthening the security and capacity-building of the country and assisting in the peace process. MINUSMA's mandate is significant for the security and stability of Mali and the wider Sahel region. We hope that MINUSMA will continue to cooperate closely with the Malian Government.

China expresses its condolences and pays tribute to the MINUSMA peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. We have taken note of the measures taken by the Secretariat — as set out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/262) — as

well as the efforts of MINUSMA to improve the security and safety of its personnel. We hope that the Mission will continue to strengthen the safety and security of its personnel and ensure that security equipment is in place. At the same time, it should continue to strengthen communication with the troop-contributing countries and the donor community in order to ensure that the Mission has the necessary equipment and resources to fulfil its mandate and act in self-defence.

China firmly supports the people of Mali in their pursuit of peace and development. China is a major troop-contributing country, with more than 400 of its peacekeepers assuming responsibilities in the areas of engineering and medicine, among others. Our contribution is widely acknowledged, and China will continue to work with the international community to contribute to the peace, stability and development of Mali.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting and commend your presence here as the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, as well as that of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and all the other members of the Governments present here today. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his detailed and very informative briefing.

As has been comprehensively outlined, the security situation in the north and centre of Mali faces various challenges. The situation has made those two areas even more vulnerable and exposed to threats such as violent extremism and organized crime, including trafficking in persons as well as trafficking in drugs and weapons. Against that background, there are also ecological and climate challenges. Given the explosive situation that is endangering the very existence of the State, it is important to continue promoting broad consultations and exchanges between national and international stakeholders and partners in order to provide the tools to combat and prevent terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, both at the national level and throughout the Sahelo-Saharan region.

Despite the unwavering international mobilization and support for the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the situation in Mali remains of great concern. The

Republic of Equatorial Guinea once again wishes to firmly condemn the continued attacks being perpetrated against Blue Helmets, United Nations personnel, the Malian armed forces and, above all, against the population. The Government of Equatorial Guinea wishes to express its appreciation of, and pay tribute to, all national and international defence forces involved in the brave efforts to combat violence and transboundary organized crime in Mali and throughout the Sahel region. Those despicable attacks must serve to strengthen the determination of the Malian authorities, in collaboration with the African Union and the international community as a whole, to continue to support, to the extent possible, efforts aimed at combating terrorism and violent extremism as well as to promote sustainable peace, security and stability in the country.

As we emphasized yesterday at the ministerial meeting on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and having taken into account recent events, it is essential to ensure greater international mobilization in support of the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Government of Mali throughout the country and the wider region. The central role played by all international actors must also promote a new geostrategic approach based on multi-stakeholder cooperation among the countries of the Sahel, the Maghreb countries, the European Union and the African Union, through their competent regional mechanisms, in order to contribute significantly to the improvement of the security and stability situation in Mali and the wider Sahel.

We will never tire of reiterating that, in view of that disheartening backdrop, it is imperative that the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups expedite the full implementation of the key provisions of the Malian peace agreement, as also highlighted in resolution 2423 (2018). In that regard, we welcome the efforts made by President Keita and his Government in promoting the review of the Constitution. We support the words of the Secretary-General in emphasizing that the constitutional review is an indispensable step towards adopting critical political and institutional reforms envisaged in the agreement, given that such reforms will lay the groundwork for a unified nation and a more peaceful and stable Mali. In the framework of those consultations, we stress the importance of the inclusive nature of reform and permanent dialogue with

all political actors and civil society for the successful completion of the process.

My country's Government also believes that, in order to bring the security situation under control in Mali, the national authorities must do everything in their power to put an end to massacres of all kinds, such as that of 23 March in the village of Ogossagou. Political actors must consistently ensure not to create a gateway to civil war. In the same vein, it is necessary to urgently implement the disarmament and dismantling of all militia groups committing murders and massacres, in order to protect the civilian population. The national authorities must therefore deploy the security forces to the areas most affected by such attacks. We believe that that also constitutes a solution to the current crisis.

The long-term solution to put an end to the violence and any conflict is inexorably through solutions of a political nature. In that regard, we urge all parties to be fully committed to prioritizing, supporting and actively participating in all initiatives aimed at ensuring the end of the conflict, such as the promotion of justice and reconciliation among the sons and daughters of Mali.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): At the outset, let me thank His Excellency the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing on the current situation in Mali. Likewise, we welcome the insightful remarks made by you, Mr. President, as the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, as well as the remarks made by the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs of the United States of America and the Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I also extend a special welcome to His Excellency the Prime Minister of Mali, Mr. Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif. I thank them for hosting us on our recent visit to Mali.

Allow me to join other members of the Security Council in expressing our deep concern about the current security situation in Mali following the massacres in the villages of Ogossagou and Welingara, in the Mopti region of central Mali, during the visit of the Council, which resulted in the killing of at least 160 people, including women and children. My delegation wishes

to condemn in the strongest terms those shameful attacks on innocent and defenceless civilians. We urge the Council, MINUSMA and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to help prevent further bloodshed and the systematic maiming of innocent civilians, as well as the increasing transnational organized crime, which may reverse the gains made in advancing the political process.

South Africa is pleased with the political developments and progress made so far in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We are particularly encouraged by the active involvement of the Prime Minister of Mali and President Keita in spearheading the implementation of the agreement—a clear demonstration of political will in resolving the situation in the country. South Africa therefore calls on Malian stakeholders to continue to make significant strides towards the implementation of the agreement with a view to bringing about peace and stability and preserving the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Mali. It is the responsibility of all Malian parties to ensure the successful, effective and inclusive implementation of the agreement in order for Mali to usher in a period of lasting peace, stability and prosperity. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of a committee of experts and a national consultation framework on constitutional reform, which will contribute to a political atmosphere conducive to a successful constitutional referendum—the first of its kind since 1992.

The Council has the arduous responsibility—together with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union—to support the Government of Mali and Malians in general on the path towards sustainable peace and stability. Stability in Mali is critical for that country to realize Agenda 2063 of the African Union: The Africa We Want. In that regard, we wish to commend the concerted efforts of MINUSMA in continuing to discharge its political and security-related mandate in Mali under the leadership of Special Representative Annadif. The significant progress made so far on the political track gives credence to the Secretary-General's decision to streamline the coordination of priorities between MINUSMA and the United Nations country team through the United Nations integrated strategic framework. It is against that backdrop that South Africa wishes to express its strong condemnation of all terrorist attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and Malian security forces, as

evidenced by the recent attacks perpetrated on 1, 20 and 25 January, 22 February as well as 16 and 17 March. We call on the Malian authorities to hold to account the perpetrators of those heinous crimes.

It is our considered view in South Africa that it is important to achieve sustainable peace while pursuing the objectives of reconciliation and peace. We welcome the progress made by the Prime Minister towards the operationalization of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. More attention should be paid to post-conflict reconstruction and development activities and the rights of women and children. As such, South Africa agrees with the observations made by the Secretary-General that the challenge in the implementation of the Agreement is that

“[it] is not taking place in a post-conflict context, as initially hoped for upon its signature, but in a context of continued crises, terrorism and extremist violence.” (S/2019/207, para. 57).

Those activities have the potential of eroding trust among the conflicting parties. The Council should therefore continue to support the Malian Government in dealing with this crisis.

It is of vital importance to address those conditions, given the increase in terrorism and violent extremism, and to take the necessary measures to address them so as to discontinue the vicious cycle of conflict on the continent as a whole. That would also contribute to ensuring the safety, protection and well-being of the population in the neighbourhood of Mali as well as sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. We underline the importance of regional and international coordination in fighting the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism because the geographical reach of terrorist groups is growing, constituting a serious threat to the peace and security of not only Mali but the entire Sahel region. In that context, we express our appreciation of the French Operation Barkhane.

South Africa calls for enhanced efforts on cross-border cooperation among neighbouring countries in order to strengthen mechanisms for the effective sharing of information, as well as close cooperation and coordination between MINUSMA, the G-5 Sahel and ECOWAS in bringing together efforts to address the situation in Mali and the Sahel.

My delegation would like to emphasize three things. First, we support increased assistance to MINUSMA

and the G-5 Sahel. Secondly, we reiterate the request made by the G-5 Sahel to be allowed to carry out cross-border operations into neighbouring countries to neutralize armed groups in those countries. Thirdly, we support all efforts by the Malian authorities to extend their administration across the entire Malian territory, especially in the north of Mali. The cooperation between MINUSMA and other security presences on the ground, including the Malian defence and security forces, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, the French forces and the European Union Training Mission in Mali has had a positive impact on the security situation in the region.

Mali is shouldering a huge responsibility and making huge sacrifices for most of us across the rest of Africa. I therefore urge the Council to stand by Mali and its people.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the presence among us of the Prime Minister of Mali as well as the Malian Foreign Minister. I wish to once again thank the Foreign Minister for the welcome extended to us on our visit to her country a few days ago.

Since our previous debate on the situation in Mali in January (see S/PV.8445), more Blue Helmets and Malian soldiers have been killed and the country has experienced a new spike in violence against civilians. We were in particular deeply shocked by the massacre in Ogossagou on Saturday. I wish in turn to pay tribute to the memory of all the victims.

The implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali has not progressed as quickly as we had all hoped. Belgium is greatly concerned about the delays in that implementation. That key provisions of the agreement have not been finalized jeopardizes the development, security and stability of Mali and gradually destroys the hopes that the agreement had generated among the population. It bolsters the enemies of peace, who continue to denounce the path of dialogue and compromise as a dead-end route and advocate violence as an alternative.

Therefore, Belgium of course welcomes the recent progress made in the implementation of the agreement. We particularly appreciate that the constitutional reform process is crucial but at the same time delicate to carry out — crucial as it would pave the way for the realization of a series of measures provided for in the agreement. It would also allow the country to adapt its

basic law to the realities of Mali today — significantly different to those of 1992 — for the benefit of Malians throughout the country.

Such efforts and political courage must also be extended to the other key provisions of the agreement, in spite of the difficulties and obstacles that — I am aware — are sometimes significant. I would like to underscore that that responsibility lies with the three signatory parties to the agreement, and I urge them to make it their urgent priority. Belgium wishes to stress the critical role of women in the implementation of all aspects of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, including the constitutional reform process, as essential to achieving lasting and inclusive peace. Furthermore, in view of the centrality of the peace agreement, I would like to stress that Belgium believes that it must be possible for all Council measures to be used against those who obstruct peace. Sanctions have already been put in place, and the Council should be ready to take further action if necessary.

It is hard not to mention the situation in the centre of the country, and specifically the regions of Koulikoro, Ségou and especially Mopti, where there are now victims of violence on a daily basis. We commend the efforts undertaken by Mali, in particular the establishment in 2017 of a comprehensive plan to re-establish State presence in the centre of Mali on the initiative of the Prime Minister, as well as his visits to the region to promote peace and reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is clear that, despite all of those efforts, the situation has not improved. In addition to terrorist acts, intercommunal violence has led to an alarming spiralling of violence since last year. That phenomenon is worrisome in a country such as Mali, which is historically a country of diversity and peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups. Terrorists and aggressive militias cannot be allowed to take root.

As the Council regularly recalls, the solution cannot be related only to security, although that is obviously essential. The aspirations voiced with regard to governance, the fight against corruption, justice and basic social services deserve to be heard. Living together and the refusal to stigmatize specific ethnic groups, as well as local mediation, are essential parameters for the return of State authority over the country's entire territory. Moreover, combating impunity must be made a priority.

Recent events in the centre of the country cannot remain unaddressed. I therefore stress the need for the necessary investigations to be carried out and for those responsible to be brought to justice. Without that, resentment will only increase and further fuel the violence. Only Malians hold the key, and the United Nations must support them in their efforts. In that respect, Belgium believes that the future mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) should sharpen its focus on the protection of civilians, including in the centre of the country, and in particular through supporting the authorities.

Belgium welcomes the development of an integrated strategic framework by MINUSMA and the United Nations country team. It is essential that the resources available to the United Nations as a whole in Mali be used to the fullest and in the most efficient and integrated way possible. In the same vein, Belgium remains attentive to the integrated nature of MINUSMA and encourages all pillars to work together closely.

Finally, I would be remiss not to commend the efforts of all Mission staff, and in particular Special Representative Annadif, for their work in often difficult circumstances.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome the fact that you, Sir, are presiding over this meeting and thank you for organizing it. The convening of this meeting at this level undoubtedly reflects the Security Council's interest in the issue before us and we, as the Security Council, must find solutions to it and support the people of Mali. I would also like to welcome the participation of the Prime Minister and to thank his Government for hosting the visiting mission of the Security Council last week.

We thank the Secretary-General for his valuable briefing on the latest developments in the Republic of Mali, in particular, and the Sahel region, in general. I would also like to thank and commend the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohamed Saleh Anadif, and all the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which operates on a daily basis in a hazardous environment in order to achieve peace in the Republic of Mali.

We have seen positive steps in the peace process over the past few months. However, the security situation has deteriorated, especially since the beginning of this

year, with an increasing number of attacks targeting peacekeepers and Malian forces as well as an increasing number of incidents on ethnic groups. In that regard, we express our shock and condemnation in the strongest terms regarding the heinous crime committed in Mopti on 23 March that resulted in the killing of nearly 160 people. We call upon the Government of Mali to undertake the necessary investigations concerning this crime. We express our condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of Mali. We also wish speedy recovery for the injured persons.

I would like to touch upon the following issues in my statement: the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, the security situation and the humanitarian affairs.

With regard to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, I would like to note that, during the previous Security Council meeting on Mali, which was convened in January (see S/PV.8445), we welcomed the positive steps taken to implement the agreement, in particular the establishment of provisional authorities at the district level in Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu. We also welcomed accelerating the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). But the pace of progress is not at the appropriate and expected level. As reported by an independent observer — The Carter Center — we are halfway in the implementation of the agreement. We urge all parties to intensify their efforts to ensure its implementation. Continuing delay in the peace process will not only lead to prolonging the crisis; it will also encourage terrorist groups to continue their activities.

The commitment of all parties to the cease-fire agreement since 2017 and to the peace process represented by the Pact for Peace, which was signed in October 2018, is very positive. National ownership of the peace process is essential, and the United Nations must support that aspect. We call on the parties to now implement all the requirements of the Pact for Peace in a comprehensive manner. We also encourage them to prioritize the requirements of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. There is a need for many reforms, especially constitutional reform. Those steps are essential to building trust among all parties. We call on the Government to complete its efforts specifically in the area of establishing a national consultation framework. We welcome the steps taken to launch that process.

With regard to the DDR process, we welcome the steps taken to reform the security sector and restructure of the Malian defence and security forces, which will be crucial steps in strengthening Government control over many areas that suffer from the proliferation of terrorist groups across the country. All parties must agree on the numbers of those linked to the signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation who will join the national forces.

We are concerned about the security situation following the increase in the number of attacks in the country since the beginning of the year — a threat not limited to Mali but also faced by neighbouring countries and all parts of the Sahel region. On 17 March, we witnessed a terrorist attack targeting a military base in central Mali that killed 23 soldiers. Therefore, steps must be taken to combat terrorist threats. That is a role to be performed by the Malian national forces to implement the Government's latest plan on the situation in central Mali, as well as by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to combat violent extremism in the border areas, especially because combating violent extremism is not within the mandate of MINUSMA. However, we call on the two forces to use the expertise of the Mission and support it in accordance with resolution 2391 (2017). We stress the need to fully activate the Joint Force and the importance of ensuring sustainable funding for it.

The security situation in the country is dangerous, and MINUSMA deserves appreciation given the environment in which it operates. As the Force Commander told the Mission, there are nearly 18 attacks each month by improvised explosive devices. He also stated that the Mission had improved its capabilities to be able to address half the attacks it had been subjected to. We commend that effort to confront the security challenges.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the deteriorating security situation in Mali has continued and it reflects negatively on the humanitarian issue. The activities of terrorists in central and northern Mali have contributed to the displacement of 129,000 people, whereas nearly 2.5 million people are in need of food. Many schools are closed and humanitarian challenges persist throughout the country. Therefore, the Government of Mali and the Governments of the region must cooperate with humanitarian workers to ensure that assistance reaches those in need. Kuwait appreciates the role played by the Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs to alleviate the suffering of the Malian people. We urge the Government to make every effort to open schools. Young people play an important role in stabilizing the country in the long run.

Development plays a key role in avoiding conflict, as it creates hope for the people and constitutes an important element in dissuading them from joining terrorist groups. We are pleased to see the work done by the Government in that regard. We call on MINUSMA to support it and the priority action plan for the G-5 Sahel, the 2063 Agenda of the African Union and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We reiterate our position that implementing all those strategies and achieving all their objectives is something that promotes stability.

In conclusion, I welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/207) on the implementation of paragraph 4 of resolution 2423 (2018), on the assessment of progress made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. The report provides an overview of the current situation. We must now consider the next steps to be taken pertaining to the renewal of the Mission's mandate. We will be closely monitoring developments over the next few months, and we hope that progress will be made during that period.

I would like to end my statement by expressing my sincere gratitude to the peacekeepers participating in the Mission in Mali. I commend their important role in supporting the peace process and ensuring the safety and security of the Malian people.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of Mali and the other ministers who are attending this afternoon's meeting.

The search for peace and reconciliation in Mali continues to face great challenges due to ongoing conflict among armed groups, intercommunal violence and delays in implementing essential parts of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. However, we recognize and commend the progress made in the implementation of some areas of the Agreement, in particular with regard to the establishment of interim authorities, the launch of an accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the resumption of the constitutional review process and the convening of consultations with human rights and civil society organizations on draft legislation for national agreement.

However, we regret the slow pace of implementation of some essential areas of the agreement, such as reform of the security sector and the establishment of a northern development zone in Mali, among others. That lack of progress in implementing fundamental areas of the agreement contributes to the Malian people's loss of confidence and hope for change in their efforts to live in a nation of lasting peace and opportunities. We urge the Government and the Platform coalition of armed groups to continue their joint efforts to move forward the implementation of the agreement, for the welfare and progress of their own people. Moreover, we call for the necessary resources to be provided so that the interim authorities can effectively fulfil their commitment to implementing the agreements endorsed in resolution 2423 (2018).

The Dominican Republic expresses its concern about the prevailing security situation in northern and central Mali, as well as intercommunal violence and the attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups against the Malian defence and security forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), international forces and the civilian population, in particular women and children. In that context, we commend the efforts of MINUSMA and the Government in combating impunity, and we welcome the inauguration of the regional office in Kidal of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission.

We strongly condemn the deaths of 18 soldiers and the injuries inflicted on 77 other members of the peacekeeping forces in the past six months, as well as the attack perpetrated in the town of Mopti, in central Mali, during which more than 70 people lost their lives. We express our condolences to the families of the victims. We hope that no effort is spared to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of those attacks.

The Dominican Republic firmly believes that the inclusion of women has great potential to transform societies and contribute to peace and security. In that regard, we welcome President Keita's efforts to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. We advocate continued efforts, such as the introduction of quota systems, in order to achieve meaningful and equitable representation in all areas of decision-making.

In that same vein, we believe that young people must participate in stabilization efforts in Mali. The determination of young people and their projects for consolidating peace create a multiplier effect in their

communities. In that regard, we support the efforts made by UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme to actively involve young Malians in the implementation process of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. No society can prosper and no peace agreement can last if women and young people are not empowered to play a part in consolidating peace and rebuilding the nation.

Allow me to turn to the adverse effects of climate change as a multiplier factor of the fragile internal situation of Mali. That is nothing new. Mali has spent years dealing with recurring climate-related events, such as droughts and variable levels of rainfall, for which herders and farmers have paid a high price, as well as the majority of Malians, who depend on such economic activities for a living.

Climate vulnerability in Mali, a landlocked country with a particularly arid area of territory, together with its extremely fragile, violent and insecure domestic situation, jeopardizes the scope of the country's development and a peaceful future for its population. Of particular concern to us is the humanitarian situation triggered by the convergence of all those elements, particularly food insecurity and a lack of access to water resources.

However, we also believe that that represents a major opportunity. A better understanding of the risks associated with climate change that are directly affecting the security situation in the country is the primary duty of the Security Council and, in particular, of MINUSMA. We must work hand in hand with the Government of Mali and its relevant institutions to establish mechanisms for assessing risks and designing plans and strategies to strengthen the resilience of the most affected sectors. In that context, we must also establish information and cooperation channels with local communities in order to expand early-warning mechanisms that contribute to joint planning for the impact of those climatic shifts. All of those elements must be aligned with the multidimensional approach of MINUSMA, while meeting Mali's national priorities of resilience and sustainable development.

To conclude, the Dominican Republic commends the work of MINUSMA and the various national and international actors that come together in Mali to bring peace and stability to the country and other bordering States in the region. Moreover, we are convinced

that, in order to overcome the challenges facing Mali, we will need a comprehensive strategy to implement processes that can make progress on issues related to peace, development, climate change and security, with the equal participation of women and young people. Only then, by investing in the different areas of change in Malian society, will the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community be able to bring lasting peace to Mali and ensure the sustainable development of its people.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Like others, I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important meeting, as well as the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing on the current situation in Mali. I would also like to extend our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annandif, and, of course, to all MINUSMA personnel on the ground. In that same vein, I would like to sincerely welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Maïga and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs. I thank the Prime Minister for recently hosting us in her beautiful country.

We gather here today following a visit by the Security Council visiting mission to Mali and Burkina Faso last week. That visit has been useful to us in discussing and envisioning a way forward with regard to supporting the peace process and development in Mali. We saw the sincere commitment of the Government of Mali to protecting the interests of its people. The Council and the international community must therefore give it their full support. In addition, allow me to share three pertinent points.

First, the progress achieved in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation is commendable. Indeed, there is some progress, including the continued establishment of interim authorities, as well as a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. Yet there are many areas that require further hard work and accelerated progress. The constitutional reform and the reconstitution and redeployment of defence and security forces, as well as the establishment of a northern development zone, are the areas in which Indonesia believes that progress is of the utmost importance. We appreciate the seriousness of the Government to that end through its creation of the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion, the key word being reconciliation.

In addition, we would like to reiterate our view that constitutional reform, in particular, is crucial for the success of the agreement. We hope that it will continue to progress in a meaningful and inclusive manner.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the security and humanitarian situation, particularly in the north and centre of Mali. As detailed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/262), there have been an increasing number of attacks by terrorist groups targeting the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Malian defence and security forces and other international forces serving in Mali. Insecurity in Mali has caused distress among the civilian population and has altered their livelihoods and other basic services in certain regions.

There has also been an increase in civilian casualties. Just last week, during our visit to which many have alluded in this Chamber, intercommunal violence resulted in the death of more than 160 people and injured approximately 75 others. We condemn any attack on civilians or peacekeepers and reiterate our sincere condolences and prayers for the victims.

In that regard, we would once again like to reiterate the importance of strengthening the capacity of MINUSMA and Malian law enforcement. We welcome the launch of a campaign to protect civilians by MINUSMA, which has facilitated the reconciliation process among communities. We also commend the series of community dialogues on addressing the conflict. We believe that such confidence-building, facilitation, mediation and community-engagement measures could enhance the ability of MINUSMA to protect civilians and should therefore be promoted.

While in Mali, I had the opportunity to speak with Indonesian peacekeepers serving in Bamako and Timbuktu and I heard praise and many positive stories from the people of Mali regarding the role of MINUSMA in helping the civilian population, which is a noble cause of which we should all be proud.

Thirdly, the progress achieved should translate into improved living conditions for the population of Mali. The situation in Mali has not only had an impact on the daily lives of the Malian people in terms of loss of life and livelihood — it will also be hard for Mali to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without resources, assistance and understanding from the international

community. We are ready to share experience and capacity-building in that regard.

I would also like to underline that, now more than ever, we, the international community, must pledge our solidarity to, and show our support for, the Malian people, not only by supporting United Nations resolutions but also by concretely supporting Malian economic development efforts. In our humble way, we have contributed Indonesian peacekeepers to Mali in the past and will continue to do so in the future. As the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting is being held in the next room, I would like to once again reiterate our pledge to provide a long-range reconnaissance patrol unit to MINUSMA, which would constitute over 200 personnel.

All of the points on which I have elaborated should be kept in mind when we consider MINUSMA's mandate renewal in June. As we heard during our visit to Mali, MINUSMA remains a necessary presence in the country. If MINUSMA were absent, there would be instability and loss of human life not only in Mali but also in neighbouring countries. Therefore, the future configuration and possible adjustment of MINUSMA should take into account the latest developments, aim to prevent further deterioration and have the ultimate objective of ensuring lasting stability in Mali.

In conclusion, I would like to quote an old proverb from the people of Mali: "One finger cannot lift anything". We now need the many fingers of the international community to lend a hand in helping to create a safe and prosperous Mali, which will contribute to peace in the Sahel region. Our heart is with the people of Mali.

The President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to His Excellency Mr. Soumeylou Boubéye Maïga, I would like to add an additional comment to my initial statement. Since we have also talked about the role of women in the new Government structures of Mali, I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Kamissa Camara.

I now give the floor to the Prime Minister of Mali.

Mr. Maïga (Mali) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, my delegation and I extend to you, Mr. President, our warm congratulations on the assumption of your country, France, to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. Rest

assured of the full cooperation of my country in that regard.

I would also like to wish every success to South Africa, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, Belgium and Germany in fulfilling their mandate as new members of the Council. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the delegations of Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Sweden and the Netherlands for their contribution to the pursuit of international peace and security.

This meeting gives me the welcome opportunity to convey to all Security Council members, Secretary-General António Guterres and all United Nations staff who deal with Mali the deep appreciation of President Keita and the Government and people of Mali for their continued commitment to peace and security in Mali, the Sahel and the rest of the world.

My delegation and the Malian people would like to express our deepest sympathies to the troop-contributing countries in Mali and the United Nations family and offer our deepest condolences to them for the loss of the peacekeepers who died honourably by the bullets of the enemies of peace.

In accordance with paragraph 6 of resolution 2423 (2018) and in reference to its paragraph 4 and the assessment of the results achieved under the Pact for Peace, I would like to report on the progress made by the Government of Mali six months after President Keita's oath of office, during which he committed to keeping Mali firmly on its way out of the crisis.

My delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/262) and welcomes the clarity of his briefing and his updates on the developments in my country. We also take note of the observations and the high expectations set out in the report.

At the outset, I would like to assure Council members that the President of the Republic of Mali, the Government, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, the Platform coalition of armed groups of 14 June 2014 and all the groups associated with the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process remain fully committed to the diligent and inclusive implementation of its provisions.

The establishment of a Ministry to oversee the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation has made it possible to consolidate

cooperation between the Government and signatory parties. It has also promoted the inclusion of all other groups that have accepted the Agreement. Today, all of those groups recognize each other as Malian parties. The mention of that cohesion in the report under consideration is cause for my delegation's satisfaction.

As the Council is certainly aware, presidential elections were held on 29 July and 12 August last year in peaceful conditions. President Keita, who was re-elected with more than 67 per cent of the vote, was sworn in on 4 September last year. I wish to note the remarkable contribution of the signatory parties and those associated with the Agreement to the smooth running of the electoral process. They played an important role in fostering a peaceful climate by providing security support to the process in every area in which they were present. Their positive involvement sufficiently demonstrates their strong commitment to work alongside the Government in implementing the provisions of the Agreement.

I would also like to acknowledge the important role that the United Nations Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA) played throughout the electoral process. The Mission provided us with essential financial, logistical and technical support to ensure the success of the voting process and a peaceful electoral climate. Its cooperation with the management bodies of the electoral process, its participation in securing voting operations and the training that it provided to various political and social stakeholders on the prevention of election-related violence significantly contributed to the success of the presidential elections. My delegation would therefore like to take this opportunity as we consider the report of the Secretary-General to express our sincere thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his exemplary work and contribution to the holding of peaceful presidential elections.

Since its establishment, the Government has accelerated the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, particularly with regard to institutional reforms and security arrangements. In that connection, the Head of State has instructed us to initiate a consensual and inclusive process for constitutional review and institutional reform. The process leading to the adoption of a new constitution through a referendum has begun with the establishment of a committee of experts, which started work on 16 February. The

committee is responsible for reviewing previously drafted constitutional reforms and the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. It will also take developments in Malian political life into account and conduct wide-ranging consultations at the national level.

In order to carry out its mandate, the committee has met with all parties — the signatory movements and movements associated with the agreement, trade unions, youth, women, traditional and religious authorities and civil society organizations. The few stakeholders with whom meetings could not be arranged have had their contributions acknowledged. In support of the experts' work, the Government of Mali has set up a national framework for dialogue that brings together political parties, the signatory and associated movements and civil society organizations.

Finally, to strengthen the consensual nature of the constitutional review, the President recently initiated meetings with all leaders of the majority and the opposition to gather their views on the national situation and their proposals for the revitalization of Malian social and political life, based on a common understanding of the major problems facing our nation.

While the Government is conducting constitutional and institutional reforms, it is also accelerating the implementation of the decentralization and regionalization processes. The new territorial collectivities code and the law on the conditions of the free administration of territorial collectivities, promulgated on 2 October 2017, laid a solid foundation for administrative reform and decentralization. Those laws determine the election of municipal, departmental and regional councillors through direct universal suffrage, as well as the transfer of 30 per cent of State budget revenues to local authorities. Nineteen decrees setting out the details of the powers transferred from the State to the collectivities have been adopted.

The implementation of those measures increased the transfer rate of budgetary revenue to more than 21 per cent in 2019. Therefore, the amount of transferred resources doubled between 2015 and 2019, an increase of more than \$190 million. In addition to the resources and loans earmarked for the decentralized Government departments — whose transfer to local authorities was provided for in the framework of the agreement — the transfer rate will be even higher than the prescribed rate of 30 per cent.

On 20 February, the Government also adopted a decree on the transfer of decentralized services from the State to territorial collectivities, in line with article 14 of the agreement. That transfer makes it possible to provide basic social services to the population, particularly in the areas of education, health and water and sanitation. It also creates conditions conducive to regional development, particularly in the areas of agriculture, local taxation, youth employment and energy.

I am pleased that the report of the Secretary-General has found that the percentage of civil servants and other State officials in the north and central regions increased slightly in the past six months. With regard to the interim authorities, their presence throughout all of the northern regions of Mali has enabled the establishment of a framework for the provision of basic social services to the population. In order to inaugurate and operationalize those authorities, the State budget has mobilized just over \$45 million.

Those achievements, while encouraging, cannot mean we lose sight of the extreme volatility of the security environment in which the Malian authorities are working. The terrorist threat continues to spread from the north to the centre of the country and is complicating the implementation of the agreement. Terrorist groups are inciting, sustaining and exacerbating intercommunal violence by reviving long-standing disputes and secular rivalries. To counter those emerging threats, the Government of Mali has developed and implemented an integrated security plan to strengthen security measures for the country's central regions, including the deployment of 13,000 personnel and the creation of 16 new security posts in 2018, as well as social mobilization efforts, labour-intensive employment opportunities, income-generating activities for women and youth and outreach programmes promoting social cohesion.

The Government also launched an accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process on 6 November 2018 in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. That operation concerns the elements of the joint operational mechanism and has enabled the registration and disarmament of more than 1,400 out of the expected 1,600 combatants, all hailing from the two signatory movements to the agreement and other armed groups that have accepted it. That process will continue to accommodate an additional 417 ex-combatants. Those soldiers will receive training under

the auspices of the Ministry of Defence, MINUSMA and the European Union, after which they will be assigned roles in providing security for the remainder of the DDR process in an environment that — as the Council recognizes — is a challenging one.

Between February 2018 and March 2019, more than 74,405 combatants were pre-registered by the DDR Commission, 23,427 of whom were carrying weapons. Furthermore, 17,000 of them met the eligibility criteria to participate in the DDR process. I am grateful to MINUSMA for its collaboration, which contributed greatly to the success of that process, as well as to the World Bank, which provided \$15 million for the reintegration of the first 4,000 ex-combatants to be demobilized. Meanwhile, we have also carried out a disarmament programme in central Mali to reduce intercommunal violence, during which 1,500 elements were identified. In the coming weeks, they will be joining the Soufouroulaye camp, near Mopti, to undergo various tests.

Regarding the process of security sector reform, the Government organized a high-level workshop in Bamako from 12 to 14 December 2018 at which consensus was reached with the signatory movements, particularly with regard to the reconstitution of the army, special units and territorial police. In accordance with the provisions of the agreement, the Government recalled former elements of the Malian armed forces, 505 of whom have to date returned to the defence and security forces. The issue of quotas continues to be under discussion with the signatory movements.

Thanks to the support of the European Union, the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Mali and the European Union Training Mission in Mali, the Malian defence and security forces continue their capacity-building efforts while focusing their deployment in the north. The Government has also decided to establish a border protection force in order to better monitor Mali's seven borders.

We have also undertaken efforts to create an environment conducive to development and humanitarian action. Despite difficult conditions, the Government maintained an economic growth level of 5.3 per cent and reduced the budget deficit from 2.9 per cent in 2017 to 2.5 per cent in 2018.

With regard to the implementation of the specific strategy for the development of the northern regions, the instrumental nature of the sustainable

development fund should be noted. As part of the fund's operationalization, various legislative texts relating to its creation, organization and management methods were adopted between February and November 2018. Pending the fund's effective operationalization, the Government has mobilized \$20 million to finance urgent priority expenditures in the regions of Kidal, Ménaka, Timbuktu and Gao.

The Malian people cherish the values of freedom, dignity and solidarity, which constitute our moral compass. It is our commitment to those values that has motivated our country, for more than five decades, to participate in peacekeeping missions both in Africa and beyond the continent. From 1960 until very recently, Mali provided more than 2,000 personnel — soldiers, military and police officers — who have been deployed from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Haiti, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Darfur, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

For more than half a century, our country has responded without hesitation or premeditation every time it has been called upon, whether to bring peace to territories in conflict or to help implement a return to normalcy and stability, reinstate democracy, rebuild national cohesion and restore dialogue between communities that have been torn apart. In all our interventions, we have accomplished what we consider to be our sacred duty as a nation of peace and harmony. When it was our turn to face a terrible tragedy, we, too, were met with steadfast commitment on the part of other friendly nations. In the liberation of the northern regions, the restoration of our territorial integrity and the enhanced security of our populations, our country has benefited from international solidarity on a tremendous scale. We will never be able to thank our friends and partners enough for their solidarity, which was demonstrated most recently when our country suffered two terrible tragedies in the space of a week.

We witnessed unprecedented barbarity on 17 March, when 23 of our soldiers died during a terrorist attack on their camp in the village of Dioura. Then again, on 23 March, the horror reached new heights with the massacre of more than 150 inhabitants of the village of Ogossagou. Those events serve to underline once more the need for mobilization and extreme vigilance in our fight to safeguard the future of our nation. The events at Ogossagou and Dioura generated an impressive wave of compassion and solidarity around the world, which showed our citizens that they have not been abandoned.

All those committed to restoring peace and security in our country under those circumstances have declared themselves to be Malians, as per the touching words of the Secretary-General.

On behalf of President Keita and the Government and the people of Mali, I would like to convey our gratitude for all the expressions of sympathy bestowed upon us. To our friends and to our partners, I would like to reiterate our determination to pursue our unrelenting fight against the terrorist and extremist groups — be they faceless or a thousand faces — that will not cease in their attempts to destroy our democratic and republican institutions and the cohesion and secular coexistence of our societies. By all means, we will ensure that the persons responsible for those massacres will be brought to justice.

The United Nations is among the partners that has been involved in safeguarding our country since the very earliest stages of the 2012 crisis. The Council has repeatedly reaffirmed its conviction that restoring and preserving peace in the world and managing the global security of our planet require solidarity and mutual assistance from which no nation is exempt. That is why I would like to stress the importance attached by all Malian stakeholders to maintaining MINUSMA and building its capacities so that it can continue to assist the ongoing peace process.

Initiatives to reduce the budget of MINUSMA or to downscale or reconfigure its mandate run the risk of jeopardizing the fragile progress already achieved. Indeed, for the first time since its signing, the agreement has made significant headway and a genuine impetus has been launched. To sustain that momentum, we require the full support of MINUSMA, which is constantly working with the signatory groups and those involved in the agreement's implementation to facilitate the establishment of the DDR process and the interim authorities, *inter alia*.

Today MINUSMA provides vital services to the most vulnerable populations pending the effective reconstruction of the Malian State, and therefore plays a key role in stabilizing the country. Reducing the resources available to MINUSMA will therefore have extremely negative consequences for our economic situation, leading to the strengthening of terrorist groups and the further deterioration of the situation. Similarly, although MINUSMA does not play a direct role in counter-terrorism activity, its support for the

forces carrying out that mission are essential. I refer to the Barkhane force and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force, alongside which MINUSMA plays an indispensable complementary role.

Terrorist groups have experienced major setbacks in recent months. That has opened a window of opportunity to push them back further and is grounds for the maintenance of MINUSMA in order to fully exploit that opportunity. More broadly, all forces must be mobilized to prevent the transfer of foreign terrorist fighters to our country, which would only increase the threat in the Sahel and allow it to spread to new areas, starting with countries in the Gulf of Guinea, such as Ghana, Togo, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire.

Mali welcomes the high level of attention the Security Council has afforded to the developments in our country. It is precisely that constant attention from the Council that impels us to express our concerns about the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan zone. President Keita has solemnly emphasized on several occasions that Mali is on the front line in the global mission to counter terrorism in the Sahel. Our country serves as a buffer zone for the terrorist threat, whose size and capacity should not be underestimated. That is why our Head of State has called upon our partners to not let their guard down with regard to Mali. During his tenure as President of the G-5 Sahel, he took the initiative to accelerate the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

The results we have already obtained require the staunch support of all our partners through the effective provision of the pledges made at the Nouakchott conference on 6 December 2018. While reiterating Mali's gratitude for the surge in solidarity expressed at that event, I reiterate the call of the G-5 Sahel Heads of State for predictable and sustainable funding for the activities of the Joint Force.

Recent events have shown that the risks and threats posed by terrorist and criminal groups are now not only cross-border but also multidimensional and dynamic. Those risks and threats are also apparent well beyond the borders of Mali. The measures taken to neutralize them, however, are rendered less effective by the intrinsic limitations of the current international peace and security architecture.

We cannot ignore the fact that the expansion of terrorist and criminal groups does not threaten the Sahelo-Saharan region alone but could very soon spread

throughout the entire West African region. We now need to see solidarity with the States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that are not members of the G-5 Sahel. Mali therefore calls upon the Security Council to consider ways to involve those States in MINUSMA capacity-building and in support for the actions of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. It is important to stress that new initiatives for consideration with the increased involvement of ECOWAS should not replace or duplicate the work already being carried out by MINUSMA and the G-5 Sahel. The aim is to put flexible and effective arrangements and structures in place to bolster the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime.

In the difficult circumstances we are experiencing, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Mali and the Malian people, I wish to recognize the outstanding work done by MINUSMA, under the leadership of Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Mali and Head of the Mission.

We are also extremely grateful to the French forces of Operation Barkhane, all MINUSMA troop-contributing countries and all other multilateral and bilateral partners for their ongoing commitment to finding a lasting and definitive solution to the crisis in our country. Our thoughts at this time go to those courageous friendly troops who lost their lives in the conflict. Their sacrifices have sealed an everlasting blood pact between our peoples.

In conclusion, I would say that we need to put things into perspective. Seven years ago, the very existence of our country was under threat. Much of Mali's territory was controlled by terrorist groups, the State was on the brink of collapse and our people were suffering grievously. Today, largely thanks to the enormous investment made by the international community, primarily through MINUSMA, the leadership of President Keita and the determination of the Malian people, Mali has recovered its dignity and re-established itself as a nation. The jihadists have retreated, the security situation is generally improved, a historic peace agreement has been signed and the State-building process continues.

However, we must remain realistic. While progress has been made in terms of the situation in 2013, it nonetheless continues to be of particular concern. The jihadist threat persists despite military successes, especially in central Mali, where ancestral rivalries are being exploited to inflict extreme suffering on the population, as the tragic events of 23 March cruelly reminded us. The implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, despite our tireless efforts and the progress made, remains slow and fragile — too fragile for us to let down our guard, too fragile for the international community to withdraw and too fragile for us to consider that our work is done.

I speak solemnly when I say that Mali is at a crossroads today. Two paths await us — either peace will take root so that socioeconomic development can finally be established throughout the country, or we will fall back into insecurity and political instability. The risk is genuine and the whole international community must be fully aware of it.

All our efforts on every level are now aimed at ensuring that Mali takes the first path — the path of stability, peace and development. As the Council is aware, MINUSMA and, broadly speaking, the entire international community, play a central role in the fragile equilibrium and the current progress being made. Therefore, any withdrawal will be interpreted as a sign of weakness by our common enemies and will carry a high risk of dealing a fatal blow to the already laborious and complex implementation of the agreement.

Mali's success will be a victory for the international community, just as Mali's failure will be a defeat for it. What is at stake in Mali, as we all know, is of global significance. Today, therefore, I make a solemn appeal to maintain and strengthen international mobilization, which, for us, constitutes a permanent source of motivation and commitment. Thanks to international solidarity, we have a reason to believe in peace and stability — something that all of us owe to the peoples of Mali and of the Sahel.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.