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Provisional

President: Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
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Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
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United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Intercommunal violence and terrorism in West Africa

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Intercommunal violence and terrorism in West Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; and Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security.

Mr. Chambas and Mr. Chergui are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Dakar and Addis Ababa, respectively.

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

I give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas: Let me start by thanking the United States and Côte d'Ivoire for organizing today's briefing. Intercommunal violence is a vast theme. I will attempt to highlight some of the dynamics in West Africa and the Sahel, as well as relevant responses that have brought together local, national and regional actors.

As Security Council members are aware, the region has been shaken by unprecedented violence in recent months. Last week's horrific attacks against the Inates military camp in the Niger continue to haunt the region. The Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel yesterday reiterated their call for stronger alliances and support. They also emphasized that the trio of the Government, the population and the security and defence forces should not yield. Relentless attacks on civilian and military targets have shaken public confidence, while international forces in the region have also endured significant losses. We must salute the courage and the unbroken spirit of the defence and security forces working across West Africa and the Sahel.

Incidents in the region show how terrorism, organized crime and intercommunal violence can easily intertwine, yet it is essential to avoid confusion

and distinguish among the drivers of the violence. Indigenous factors of local conflicts have been documented, including governance deficits, the poor management of natural resources, inequalities and marginalization, corruption and the broader failure of Governments to deliver their regalian functions, notably security and justice, especially in peripheral areas.

Concerning violent extremism, the strategy and objectives of armed groups in the region are in the public domain. The use of local dynamics to spread extremism was explicit in Al-Qaida's instructions to its militants in Timbuktu as early as 2012. Among their tactics was the leveraging of local grievances and of the domestic movements of persons. State weaknesses have been thoroughly exploited. Extremists provide safety, protection, social services and justice in the areas that they control. According to their perspective, long-standing grievances serve their purposes.

Conflicts related to transhumance constitute some of the most violent local conflicts in the region, and extremist groups have managed to implicate themselves in their resolution. An economic and Islamic tribunal near Gao rules on compensation and sanctions in such conflicts. Arrangements between herders and extremists have led to deep societal divides across the region. Yet we need to avoid generalities. Their relationship differs greatly from one country or region to the next. Man-made factors and the prevalence of weapons combined with a harsh natural environment, as well as expanding desert areas and climate change, are significant issues related to transhumance. But let us bear in mind that close to 70 per cent of people in West Africa remain dependent on agriculture and the rearing livestock for their existence. Finding ways to ensure peaceful coexistence between herders and farmers is therefore imperative.

Other forms of communal violence are triggered by the nature of the fight against terrorism itself in many of the countries of the region. Furthermore, they do not have the sufficient security forces to provide adequate geographical coverage. Resorting to sub-contracting local defence forces or vigilantes is a double-edged sword. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has been advocating for improved legal frameworks and longer-term approaches with a number of Governments that are aware of the risks.

With regard to religious violence across the region, this year has been particularly brutal. Burkina Faso

especially has seen unprecedented anti-Christian attacks. The perpetrators, together with other violent extremists, and through the use of internal communal violence have driven hundreds of thousands of people away from their homes in the northern and central-north regions. That exodus has caused the flow of internally displaced persons to reach 500,000 people, as compared to about 50,000 during the same period last year. This year we have observed similar patterns of targeted religious violence around Tillbéri and Diffa. Ideologically motivated violence can feed on conflicts, tearing apart communities over land or water disputes. That violence, however, has its own causes and rationale, and therefore needs to be addressed differently. Governments, local actors, regional organizations and the international community have mobilized to address that multidimensional violence. I would like to summarize some of the concerted responses and the existing strategic framework.

The United Nations response in the Sahel has, under the Secretary-General, increased its cross-pillar focus. Across West Africa and the Sahel, multi-agency initiatives bring together security, development, rule of law and human rights interventions. Our approach is anchored on supporting national Governments in their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and on building partnerships towards greater synergies. We now have useful instruments in place, including the compliance framework for the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and a renewed focus by United Nations country teams on governance issues. Weak justice systems remain some of the critical deficiencies with regard to national responses. National Governments fully welcome the efforts to strengthen justice and police institutions under the various initiatives by the Group of Seven and the Sahel Alliance. The United Nations system should also be mobilized in that regard.

Regional organizations remain our first counterparts for conflict resolution in the region. The recent African Union conference on access to natural resources and conflict between communities held with the assistance of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Bamako in November provided a framework for the prevention and resolution of local conflicts. Ahead of Commissioner Chergui's recommendations, I would like to call on the Council to support the implementation of the Bamako declaration. The Council should also extend

support to local initiatives. We have seen progress in recent months in curbing violence between herders and farmers as a result of grass-roots dialogue initiated in Mali, the Niger and Nigeria. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is also gathering best practices from the region, drawing on traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Remedies to violent extremism in particular are being put in place in many West African countries. They consist of common denominators, political will, courageous local actors and the involvement of women and young people.

As Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) emphasizes, youth are at the heart of such responses. Social and traditional media have a key role to play in curbing violent ideologies and religious intolerance, as a means to address hateful narratives. There are many grass-roots initiatives in that regard, such as the interfaith coalitions in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in Nigeria that actively work to curtail Boko Haram from recruiting members. Local peacemakers also benefit from the support of the Finland-based Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, launched in 2013. Bilateral assistance at the country level throughout the region is also increasingly looking into grass-roots reconciliation initiatives.

The Council can play a decisive role in supporting all those efforts. In addition to donor and technical support, assistance on security-related and law enforcement matters remains vital. Curbing the financial and support corridors used by armed groups and their links with illegal trade requires international cooperation. Targeted sanctions and other measures recommended by panels of experts are relevant for leverage in this case. Illegal trafficking in gold in particular has been increasingly documented and exposed. The ECOWAS summit held in Ouagadougou in September and yesterday's G-5 Summit in Niamey, as well as the discussions planned for the ECOWAS summit to held on 21 December in Abuja, highlight the undeterred regional solidarity and the commitment to bring this violence to an end.

The Security Council's support for the region cannot falter at this juncture. The presentation of the Secretary-General's report and consultations on UNOWAS's mandate in January will provide us with more opportunities to review the complexity of the security dynamics in the region and pathways to peace and security.

The President: I thank Special Representative Chambas for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

Mr. Chergui: At the outset, let me congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December and express my gratitude for the invitation extended to me, which reflects the growing and excellent partnership between our two organizations.

I also wish to commend the Council for discussing for the first time the interlinkage between intercommunal violence and terrorism in West Africa. This issue is indeed a bitter reality that concerns us all and that we should all responsibly and collectively address. I want to thank my brother Mr. Chambas for his briefing and the pertinent proposals that he made.

The situation is alarming. The resurgence of violent armed attacks by terrorist and extremist groups in West Africa and the Sahel, as demonstrated by the recent attack in Inates, the Niger, and Mali, and the almost daily attacks in Burkina Faso indicate a worsening human security situation in the region. This is despite efforts by States, indigenous civil-society organizations and the international community to restore security.

The interlinkages between armed groups in the region are becoming increasingly sophisticated in a constantly changing environment. The armed groups are involved in illicit activities to fund their operations, including weapons trafficking, artisanal gold mining, motorcycle and fuel sales, cattle rustling and poaching. They are also involved in local conflicts, not only fuelling them but also serving as mediators in some cases or as an interposition force between warring communities. The armed groups are also using the neighbours of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger as transit zones for their illegal activities, such as the sale or purchase of motorcycles, spare parts and fertilizers. They also fund their activities by selling stolen livestock for consumption in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

The security situation is further exactly exacerbated by the region's vulnerability to climate change, which worsens rapid- and slow-onset disasters, food insecurity, water scarcity and transhumance conflicts. The threat of food insecurity will challenge the resilience of citizens in the region in the coming years and has the potential to render vulnerable young

people susceptible to the narrative and propaganda of criminal and extremist groups.

This devastating situation has further created a grave humanitarian situation that requires our attention. I have in mind the 2,850 schools that have been shut down in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger due to the operations of violent extremist groups. Hundreds of boys and girls have been conscripted, abducted, raped and killed by extremist groups, with a consequent psychosocial impact on their families and communities. The State's limited presence in the peripheries has also hampered its efforts to provide protection to communities. Even in places where there is a Government presence, Government authorities remain perplexed and challenged. Trust and confidence in traditional mechanisms of conflict management have also eroded considerably. We must pool our efforts to assist the Governments of the region to strengthen the authority of the States in the peripheries.

We in the African Union (AU) have been seized of this issue from the beginning by supporting the efforts of the region to address the crisis. We recognize the gains made through multilateral international partnerships, including the activities and initiatives launched and sustained through the Nouakchott Process, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force.

I wish also to seize this opportunity to note the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. The African Union Peace and Security Council, concerned about this issue, requested the Commission, during its 838th meeting, on 9 April, to develop a credible framework for the effective prevention and management, as well as the resolution, of local conflicts, including intercommunal violence and transhumance and land disputes, in collaboration with other relevant organizations and mechanisms.

The African Union, in collaboration with the Government of Mali and the support of the United Nations, convened a ministerial conference on the theme "Access to natural resources and conflict between communities" on 28 and 29 November in Bamako, at which the Bamako Declaration was adopted. The Declaration consists of a set of recommendations articulated around seven key objectives.

First, it encourages the member States to sign, ratify and domesticate the relevant legal instruments

with a view to facilitating the implementation of the actions agreed on in the Declaration.

Second, it urges the African Union Commission, in cooperation with the appropriate regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, to develop a policy framework for local conflict prevention, management and resolution, accompanied by a plan of action.

Third, the Bamako Declaration calls for a plan of action that should support local, national and international efforts in the prevention and management of conflicts between communities through adaptive and innovative approaches.

Fourth, it also calls for the deployment, as necessary, of African Union tools, in particular the African Union Border Programme, to assist member States in their efforts to strengthen social cohesion and community safety. I am pleased to report that in this regard, through the African Union Border Programme, work has already begun in countries such as Mali, the Niger, Burkina Faso, Benin, Zimbabwe and Botswana, to name but a few.

Fifth, it urges the African Union Commission to work with member States to mobilize financial resources for investment in local community development and security projects.

Sixth, it requires the identification, development and standardization of good practices and policies as well as their popularization.

Seventh, it recommends the initiation of a common process of reflection with respect to ownership of all data specific to this conflict and to promote an African solution with respect for local traditions and values.

Lastly, it calls for the coordination of interventions promoting social cohesion between communities, in particular the restoration of trust between States and peoples, and to ensure that judicial mechanisms, traditional and State-led, are able to respond promptly and equitably to the need for transparency and proximity to win the confidence of the populations concerned.

More recently, on 13 December, the African Union Peace and Security Council welcomed the Bamako declaration, recognizing that it provides us with a road map to curb those local conflicts, which are paralysing our efforts to silence the guns by 2020. We look forward to working with the United Nations and our regional

economic communities and mechanisms to implement those recommendations.

The reality is that, despite all our efforts, we are collectively failing to reverse this trend. On the contrary, the situation is worsening. Beyond calling on the Council to support the Bamako declaration, I therefore want to say that we need to reset. Let me repeat — we need a reset. Allow me to make four key suggestions on the way forward.

First, we need to creatively rethink the military support that we are providing to the countries of the region. The challenges encountered are beyond the capacity of the States concerned. Certainly, addressing this issue will require a holistic approach that must involve political and socioeconomic actions, such as strengthening the presence of the State in the periphery and ramp up States' capacities to deliver basic services, including as it pertains to the rule of the law, education, infrastructure and strong environmental policies to address climate change.

Secondly, the African Union and the United Nations, guided by the Bamako declaration, in an integrated manner can work to develop mechanisms to support our States members in various areas.

Thirdly, the African Union and the United Nations should jointly co-chair a coordinating mechanism to bring some coherence to the more than 16 strategies concerning the Sahel.

Fourthly, we should all condemn the stigmatization of certain groups in the region, as it creates a dangerous attitude of "us versus them".

Let me conclude by stressing that we need to redouble our efforts. The lack of solidarity with the countries of the region at the regional and international levels has been troubling. We are facing threats that do not respect boundaries and have the potential of rapidly spreading across the continent and beyond. The African Union joint partnership has come a long way. Nowhere is it needed more than ever than in the Sahel and the region of West Africa. It is our hope that the spirit of cooperation that we have developed over the years will characterize our efforts to address the numerous and complex issues that lie ahead for the region.

The President: I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas and Ambassador Chergui for their briefings. I also thank Côte d'Ivoire for co-hosting this meeting with us. Today's meeting is a strong finish to that country's efforts over the past two years to highlight challenges in West Africa. Côte d'Ivoire has been a distinguished partner in this Chamber, and its voice will be truly missed.

Let me also begin with words of condolence to our friends in the Niger who will join the Security Council in January. The deepest sympathies of the United States are with the families of the more than 70 soldiers of the Niger who were killed in the 10 December terrorist attack. It is with that latest attack in mind that we meet today to better understand how the international community can prevent violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel.

In West Africa there has been an explosion in violent extremism and intercommunal conflict as jihadist cells attempt to take root. Those groups fuel violence by exploiting local grievances, a lack of State presence and existing intercommunal tensions. We have seen a dramatic uptick in the tempo and complexity of attacks against security forces in Mali and the Sahel, especially by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. Boko Haram and Islamic State's West African Province also continue to terrorize the Lake Chad region. Meanwhile, the protracted conflict in Libya threatens to further destabilize an already-fragile Sahel.

That violence has most acutely affected civilians, reducing food security and displacing more than 900,000 people. When communities feel that they must compete for limited resources, or that they cannot rely on their Governments to provide basic infrastructure, economic opportunity and protection, they are more likely to become aggrieved. Citizens must have the confidence that their Governments can and will protect them. If not, they will seek out other means of protection, including joining violent or criminal groups. Good governance and capable and accountable security forces are critical to violence prevention.

What should we do to reverse that trend and create the necessary conditions for peace and stability? The solutions are many, although I would like to highlight a few today.

First, a military response alone often fails to address the root causes of violent conflict. Societal resilience to the threat of violent extremism is born

from community-led efforts. Secondly, all communities in West Africa and the Sahel should enjoy inclusive representative governance. That includes access to essential services and resources and accountability for leaders who fail to meet those needs. Thirdly, in order to maintain accountability, civil leaders at every level must have an active role in upholding the social contract between citizens and their Governments.

This is not just talk. The United States administers numerous programmes to support those solutions. In 2017 and 2018 we provided more than \$5.5 billion in support of long-term stability and security in West Africa. In the Lake Chad region we provided nearly \$470 million in assistance to address underlying drivers of conflict and counter terrorist threats. Our United States Young African Leaders Initiative invests in capacity-building to equip young leaders with the skills to build bridges in conflict and lead democratic societies. Our Prosper Africa Initiative supports trade, investments and livelihoods in urban and rural areas. And the State Department's Sahel Development Partnership offers a holistic approach to bolster resilience and counter violent extremism.

Those are just a few examples of how the United States partners with West Africa to foster a more prosperous, democratic and stable region. But, in order to combat regional violence and enhance stability, we need greater commitment from Governments of the region. The United States supports Nigeria's efforts to end violence, facilitate the swift and voluntary return of displaced communities and bring those responsible for abuses to justice. But I must reiterate the need for unhindered life-saving humanitarian access for relief organizations to serve the people of Nigeria, including the areas most affected by Boko Haram.

We look forward to the advancement of cornerstone political objectives such as the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emanating from the Algiers process. But we remain concerned that the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups have made little progress implementing the Agreement. The United States is optimistic about our collective ability to make progress in this vital region. We believe that, working together both in the Council and with Governments of the region, there is no limit to the potential of West Africa and its people that can be unleashed.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for convening this public meeting on intercommunal violence and preventing violent extremism in West Africa, a region severely affected by evolving security challenges that affect the stability and the very existence of the States in the region.

I commend His Excellency Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), for their excellent briefings and the relevance of their recommendations. Their analyses expose the extreme seriousness of intercommunal violence and violent extremism — two scourges that unfortunately push vulnerable populations, including young people and entire communities, towards terrorist armed groups and cross-border criminal networks.

At this point I would like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the brave Malian, Nigerien and Burkinabé soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for the noble cause of peace and security in their countries and our region. Once again 71 Nigerien soldiers were taken from their countries, families and friends yesterday. They died for their country, and we hope the blood they shed will fertilize the seeds of a peace that we all want to see as soon as possible and that their sacrifice will not be in vain.

I am very pleased to be following our eminent briefers in taking the floor on behalf of the African countries elected to the Security Council — Equatorial Guinea, South Africa and my own country, Côte d'Ivoire — in order to share our common vision of peace and security issues which, though they may be particularly acute in West Africa, are just as much a common denominator in many parts of Africa. Our vision resonates perfectly with the Bamako declaration on access to natural resources and conflict between communities, adopted at the ministerial meeting held in Bamako on 28 and 29 November at the initiative of the African Union and with the support of the United Nations and the regional African economic communities.

From a security and humanitarian point of view, 2019 will undoubtedly remain one of the darkest years that West Africa and the Sahel have experienced, due to the intercommunal violence and terrorist attacks, which have resulted in several hundred deaths and the internal displacement of thousands more. They have also led to the closure of many schools, depriving thousands of children of their fundamental right to education. In addition, terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks are gradually getting a foothold in many regions that suffer from weak or virtually absent State institutions. In areas where the State's sovereign authority should prevail, such deleterious groups provide security and social alternatives by exploiting intercommunal tensions to their advantage. Among many other things, the feelings in some communities of marginalization, their desire for protection, tensions over the control of water resources, arable land and pastures, the lack of basic social infrastructure and the endemic unemployment of young people are all reasons for the intercommunal violence and violent extremism.

In the face of these threats to security in the entire region and far beyond, we have a duty to act urgently and decisively, while supporting current initiatives through responses that take into account the internal, transnational and external causes of intercommunal violence and violent extremism. To that end, the African countries elected to the Security Council endorse the briefers' recommendations and believe that responses to the current security and humanitarian issues should be developed within the framework of a multidimensional approach based on the promotion of a constructive and inclusive national dialogue.

Because they have a sovereign responsibility to provide for the security and social needs of their peoples, the States of the region need the necessary capacities to respond to their people's concerns. It is therefore important for States to address their current weaknesses in the areas of security and defence, the early warning and management of intercommunal violence and the fight against poverty and unemployment, which fuel violent extremism. In that regard, the three African members of the Security Council would like to take the opportunity offered by this debate to reiterate their call for increased support to the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in order to further operationalize the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force, and also to support development initiatives, which will promote

the economic and social recovery of the areas affected by intercommunal violence.

However, we must keep in mind that strengthening States' capacities on the security and social fronts will not be productive unless it is accompanied by initiatives that can counter community mistrust of the public authorities and security and defence forces. That is why we firmly believe that promoting bold and inclusive dialogue with marginalized communities would help to ensure that their needs are taken into account when public policies are formulated, and would eliminate the spiral of intercommunal violence that reflects a deep need for dialogue. In that process, civil society and the media should also play a decisive role in preventing intercommunal violence and extremism. It is civil society's multifaceted nature that enables it to bring together community leaders, women and young people as well as civil-society organizations, and that can make it a crucible in which to develop consensus solutions to the security and social challenges facing States and local communities.

For their part, the media, including social networks and community radio, are essential for educating and raising awareness about all forms of violence, as well as spreading messages of peace, tolerance and social cohesion. They are also communication tools that make it possible to demolish the radical ideology and rhetoric of terrorist groups. In short, through dialogue and concerted initiatives to alleviate community tensions, the public authorities, civil society and local communities can work for strong local ownership in the fight against intercommunal violence and violent extremism.

The African countries of the Security Council also believe that the transnational and transregional nature of intercommunal violence and violent extremism requires enhanced cooperation in security, defence and economic and social development. It is essential to ensure the coherence and coordination of initiatives at the regional and transregional levels, promote the sharing of experiences and good practices and strengthen cooperation in the areas of intelligence and legal assistance.

We salute the heroic efforts of Mali and Burkina Faso to combat intercommunal violence and violent extremism, despite particularly difficult economic circumstances. They are the last defence against the spread of jihadi groups to the coastal countries of West

Africa. If that defence were breached it would provide the terrorist surge with a perfect opportunity to realize its dreadful ambitions of controlling the subregion's ports and enormous economic potential and installing an Islamic caliphate. West Africa and the Sahel would then become the centre of a terrorist cancer that could metastasize to other parts of the world.

The challenges of combating intercommunal violence and extremism therefore extend well beyond the geographic area of West Africa and the Sahel. We are facing a regional and international security emergency that is more acute than ever and deserves our full attention. The three African countries elected to the Council therefore urge the international community and development partners to increase their various contributions to the ongoing development initiatives in the region.

Finally, we reiterate our plea for the Security Council's decisive involvement in the quest for a lasting solution to the conflict in Libya, which is a true Pandora's box whose opening has exacerbated insecurity and instability in West Africa and the Sahel and created conditions conducive to the establishment of terrorist groups. Despite the current grave security threats, the willingness of States of the region to engage in a relentless fight against intercommunal violence, violent extremism and terrorism has never been stronger, as evidenced by the commitments undertaken on 14 September in Ouagadougou by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States and by the West African Economic and Monetary Union in Dakar on 1 December. They very much hope that the Security Council will do its part in this key period, when regional and international peace and stability are at stake.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We listened carefully to the briefings by Special Representative Chambas and Mr. Smaïl Chergui, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. Their opinions and suggestions deserve the Security Council's full attention.

China strongly condemns last week's terrorist attack in the Niger. We would like to express our sorrow for the victims and our deep condolences and sympathy to the bereaved families and the injured, to whom we wish a speedy recovery from their pain and injuries.

The current situation in West Africa is generally stable. The economy continues to develop, and

the efforts to achieve strength and unity have had remarkable results. There have been many success stories for the good offices, mediation and peacekeeping operations of the United Nations in West Africa. For example, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire have graduated, as we say, from the Security Council agenda and have embarked on a path of sustainable development. However, the region is also facing threats and challenges, traditional and non-traditional, that call for the international community's attention and support.

One of those challenges is intercommunal violence. Transhumance has led to increased competition for resources such as land and water, resulting in frequent conflicts between farmers and herders. Among other factors, ethnic and religious differences, climate change and the prevalence of weapons have exacerbated the region's problems. What is even more worrying is that in the past few years terrorism and extremism have taken advantage of those problems as opportunities. Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have continued to grow in West Africa, and extremist militants have returned and used these conflicts to launch attacks, posing unprecedented threats to regional peace and stability. At the same time, the links between intercommunal violence and terrorism have increased and demand a holistic approach on the part of the international community.

We must accelerate development in West Africa with a view to eliminating this breeding ground for intercommunal violence and conflicts, which in essence are a struggle for development resources. Extreme poverty and a lack of development are the root causes. We should put our full weight behind economic and social development in order to increase investment and trade in Africa with a view to eradicating poverty. Education and employment opportunities should be provided, especially for young people. All communities should be guaranteed the right to development and the equal provision of public services. Economic development should also help to enhance the capacity of the countries of the region to adapt to climate change and give them the resources they need to improve governance and protect their various communities. China is actively helping countries of the region to work on infrastructure and development in order to strengthen connectivity. It has also provided education and vocational training opportunities to young people in Africa through scholarships for their study in China

and the establishment of education and training centres, among other things.

We should also adopt integrated policies to eradicate the root causes of terrorism. The international community should promote the political settlement of hotspot issues in West Africa and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means. Dialogue on an equal footing among different civilizations and religions should be encouraged in order to promote their harmonious coexistence. The countries of the region should be helped to enhance their counter-terrorism and deradicalization capacities. There should be a major focus on settling ongoing issues such as the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, the diversification of financing channels for terrorist organizations and the convergence of terrorist organizations and organized crime. The countries of West Africa should be supported in strengthening their border control and law-enforcement coordination, intelligence-sharing and other practical cooperation measures.

We have established the China-Africa Peace and Security Fund to boost our cooperation with Africa in the areas of peace, security, peacekeeping and law and order. The first batch of assistance materials, worth ¥200 million, has already arrived in Africa to support the African Standby Force and its capacity to respond immediately to crises. We have also provided ¥300 million in aid for the counter-terrorism operation in the Sahel and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We should ramp up our cooperation to jointly address the challenges in this area. China supports African countries in finding African solutions to African problems, and commends the special summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in September for coming up with new ideas and measures to combat terrorism. We also support ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States in jointly exploring solutions to intercommunal conflicts and terrorism.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force for combating Boko Haram are examples of proactive initiatives that West African countries are taking to jointly respond to the terrorist threat in the region, and they constitute important contributions to international and regional peace and security. The international community should support the United Nations in providing the financial support that these relevant regional efforts need. Since the China-United Nations Peace and Development

Trust Fund was established it has provided financial support to various peacekeeping and counter-terrorism capacity-building projects in Africa.

We should also strengthen coordination, and the various United Nations entities should forge synergies. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) should continue to work in accordance with its mandate to strengthen cooperation with all parties to promote regional peace and stability. The United Nations country teams, the United Nations Development Programme and other entities should fully leverage their respective advantages, strengthen coordination and cooperation with UNOWAS and work together to play a constructive role in achieving regional peace and stability. China will continue to support the work of Special Representative Chambas and UNOWAS.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin, Madam President, by drawing attention to the fact that the theme of the briefing as it was designated in the Security Council's December programme of work is somewhat different from what you have proposed for our discussion today, according to the explanatory note. We assume that you no doubt realized that replacing the topic of terrorism issues with the politicized concept of the prevention of violent extremism could meet with a negative reception.

However, my statement will focus on the meeting's original concept, which proposed a discussion of the sources of terrorist threats in West Africa, an exchange of views with the countries concerned and a consideration of ways to end the crisis with the participation of key international bodies. In that connection, I would like to thank Mr. Chambas and Mr. Chergui for their detailed briefings on the experience they have accumulated and the evaluations of the situation that they have developed based on the policies of the bodies that they head.

The Russian Federation would like to express its sincere condolences to the people and the Government of the Niger for the deaths on 10 December of more than 70 Nigerien soldiers as a result of a terrorist attack on a military camp near the border with Mali. We hope that the perpetrators of this heinous crime will be found and duly punished. We affirm our full support to Niamey in its fight against the threat of terrorism.

The terrible events that took place in the Niger unfortunately confirm the further deterioration of the security situation in that part of the continent. Almost

weekly we receive tragic reports about the deaths of dozens of military personnel or civilians at the hands of criminal gangs in a country of the region. The States of the Gulf of Guinea are also at risk of destabilization.

We share the concerns of other members of the Security Council that Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham have strengthened their presence on the African continent. Of particular concern is the establishment of the Islamic State in West Africa, which has consistently proclaimed the goal of building a global caliphate in the countries of the region and is actively engaged in terrorist activities at the junction of the borders of Cameroon, Nigeria, the Niger and Chad.

Unrestricted migration flows, which allow terrorists to capitalize on economic difficulties and recruit new members, the collapse of arms control systems, and in some cases even the failure to establish them, and the ongoing cross-border smuggling, including of narcotics, have enabled terrorist groups to have a robust resource base.

Today some countries are seeking to prove to us that conflicts between farmers and nomadic herders have become the primary reason for the upsurge in violence in the region, as we have seen in the concept note for today's meeting. It is not the reason for but the consequence of what is happening. In general, we do not agree that the real root causes of terrorism in Africa are linked only to domestic economic and political issues.

It is important to adopt a balanced approach that takes into account the full range of issues that give rise to terrorism, including external interference, as clearly demonstrated in Syria and Libya, for example. West African States are compelled to reap the fruits of the collapse of Libya's statehood as a result of NATO's intervention. We believe that, without the normalization of the situation in that country, namely, Libya, and we are told this by Africans themselves, it is virtually impossible to bring about lasting stability in the region.

Instead of honestly answering the question as to why a power vacuum has developed in certain countries of the region and from where terrorists receive such weapon stockpiles, our Western partners seek to indulge West African States with all kinds of programmes based on their one-sided approach to preventing violent extremism.

In the absence of a universally recognized definition of violent extremism enshrined in international law, we call on our partners to avoid language that has not been agreed, including new terms such as “homegrown violent extremist organizations”.

Working directly with civil society and circumventing the Government, which lies at the heart of the approach to preventing violent extremism, in our view sets the stage for interference in internal affairs, including in order to provoke so-called colour revolutions or their like. Let me stress that we do not dispute the idea in itself of harnessing civil society in conjunction with strengthening the law enforcement counter-terrorism component. However, that capacity should be used in line with the characteristics and traditions of the State without undermining its leading role in counter-terrorist activities based on international legal norms rather than certain rules of the world order.

If the sponsors of such an approach to preventing violent extremism really want to demonstrate its effectiveness, let them first try to delegate law enforcement functions to non-State actors on their territories. We doubt that this will enable them to resolve the pressing issues of the proliferation of xenophobic and neo-Nazi ideas and the resurgence of right-wing extremist organizations calling for violence against those of other races, ethnicities and religions. In the meantime, selective activities for the prevention of violent extremism with a focus on developing countries appear to be a tool for political manipulation. We believe that the only way to effectively counter the threat of terrorism is by avoiding double standards based on a comprehensive approach, combining both robust law enforcement and multifaceted preventive activities.

We are convinced of the need to further coordinate the efforts of both Africans and the international community to combat terrorism in the Sahara-Sahel region. To that end, we support the efforts of the States of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin to deploy forces to combat terrorism and organized crime. It is necessary to effectively counter the expansion of extremist ideology, to tackle head on pressing socioeconomic problems, to strengthen State institutions and to foster a culture of respect for human rights. In that regard, we attach great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in the region. In addition, we support the decision adopted at

the Niamey summit by States members of the Economic Community of West African States to invest up to \$1 billion in improving the situation in the region.

Russia is closely monitoring the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. We are already providing a number of countries with relevant military and technical assistance and training for military and police personnel. We call on all States to strengthen multifaceted counter-terrorism cooperation with the countries of the region that is not limited just to resolving intercommunal disputes or substituting such efforts with abstract speculation about the threat of violent extremism.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me thank today’s briefers for their very informative interventions. Allow me also to express our sincere condolences to the families of the soldiers of the Niger killed in a barbaric attack last week. That tragic event clearly shows us the importance and timeliness of today’s briefing.

West Africa remains plagued by severe transnational challenges, from climate change, poverty and worsening youth unemployment to irregular migration and human, weapon and drug trafficking, as well as a wave of violent extremism and terrorism. It is necessary to reinforce the resilience of those countries to emerging threats, including those on ethnic and religious grounds.

To that end, at the community level, several formal and informal institutions play critical roles. Religious institutions are of particular importance. Religious leaders, traditionally involved in the life of their communities, may however be unable to play their part, especially when internal governance mechanisms are weak or not in place.

It is equally important to support and strengthen the capacity of local governments in preventing inter-tribal conflicts and fighting against disseminated stereotypes, whose aim may be to marginalize certain social and political groups and to destabilize the situation in the region.

Communities that are marginalized from political processes and suffer from the effects of underdevelopment, poor service delivery and high levels of unemployment are extremely vulnerable to the influence of violent extremist groups. Empowering them can be a vital part of the solution and a force for change.

Gender inequality is another worrisome issue. There is a need to invest in women's capacity to prevent violent extremism in their communities. Radicalization and the dynamics of violent extremism affect men and women in different ways. While young men appear to be more prone to joining such groups, women, as mothers, wives and friends of those radicalized are more often either targeted or chosen to serve as direct and indirect sources of support for those violent groups.

In conclusion, addressing all of the aforementioned challenges requires a sustained and holistic approach on the part of all stakeholders, including through the implementation of the stabilization strategy for countries affected by Boko Haram, the Group of Five for the Sahel priority investment plan, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. Therefore, we call on national, regional and international partners to intensify efforts to address the root causes of insecurity and instability in the region, including poverty and inequality, exclusion and marginalization, the lack of access to social services and economic opportunities, human rights violations and the impact of climate change.

It goes without saying that responsibility for combating terrorism cannot be entrusted to national, subregional and regional stakeholders only. Terrorist attacks are a global problem, which is why violence in West Africa and the Sahel should be combated with joint efforts, and Poland stands ready to pay its share in the global combat against terrorism.

Mr. Ugarelli (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this timely meeting and the valuable briefings of the guest speakers.

Peru notes with concern the serious threats looming over the West African subregion, which contrast with its vast resources, the resilience of its population and its geostrategic potential to drive its sustainable development. In particular, we refer to the expansion of terrorism and violent extremism and their close connection with organized crime, as well as their roles as an aggravating factor of intercommunal violence. In that regard, we would like to address three central aspects of that problem from the perspective of seeking effective actions to address it, and we firmly condemn the recent attacks that have taken place in the region, particularly that which occurred in the

Niger, to whose people and Government we extend our sincerest condolences.

First, it is necessary to attack the link between terrorism and organized crime. Resolution 2482 (2019), adopted by the Council in July, specifically seeks to promote actions aimed at deepening understanding of the links between the two phenomena in order to identify, prevent and dismantle them. That can be done by strengthening the capacities of States and promoting more effective coordination at the national and international levels; action at those levels must be consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in order to provide legitimacy to the State's response. We welcome the meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States on that issue, held in Ouagadougou in September. We believe it necessary, in particular, to identify and dismantle the chain of logistical support, including especially in the drug trafficking that has turned West Africa into a subregion of both production and transit to European markets and where terrorist groups exchange money or weapons for their protection at various stages of that criminal process. That situation is compounded by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and natural resources. Such activity corrupts institutions and erodes social fabric. To that end, it is necessary to strengthen neighbourhood cooperation by strengthening intelligence work and border control to deal with those crimes.

Secondly, it is also essential to combat the negative influences between terrorism and intercommunal violence, the root causes of which are climate change, demographic pressure and the absence of an effective State presence, among others. The situation is exacerbated by terrorist groups that destroy systems capable of providing peaceful solutions to tensions between pastoral and farming groups in a context of degraded farmland and erratic rainfall, or that, by favouring some groups over others or exacerbating inter-ethnic or inter-religious tensions, increase conflict in order to exploit it as a source of human resources for their indiscriminate attacks. It will be necessary for regional organizations, such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to provide spaces for dialogue on those conflicts, while promoting appropriate legislation, the adaptation of new crops and the creation of impact projects that would generate

income and employment, especially for young people in rural communities.

A third element, which defines the entire context, lies in the need to complement the counter-terrorism response by addressing the root causes of the conflict from a multidimensional perspective that offers a better quality of life to vulnerable populations and strengthens capacities to promote human rights and the rule of law, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, the international community must contribute effectively to promoting development from its own regional perspectives, particularly in that subregion, where various transition processes are being developed. Along those lines, we believe that there is no better preventive activity for those conflicts than sustainable peacebuilding. That will necessarily require the establishment of societies that are more open and inclusive of all strata of the population, particularly women and young people.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): We offer our thanks first to you, Madam President, and to Cote d'Ivoire for convening today's important debate, and to our briefers for giving us their time and their insights.

The deteriorating situation in West Africa is a source of major concern, as we have heard from everyone in the Council today. That was underlined again by this past week's terrorist attack in western Niger, in which many Nigerien soldiers lost their lives. Our condolences go to the families of those troops and of all those civilians, national forces and United Nations peacekeepers who have suffered at the hands of violent extremists in West Africa

As we have heard, the Organization also has a vital role to play in supporting national and regional efforts to address the drivers of violence. But that instability cannot be solved by the United Nations alone, nor can it be solved through purely military or counterterrorist initiatives. We need to address the underlying drivers of the conflict. Strengthening stability and security across West Africa requires a comprehensive approach to the interconnected drivers. In too many parts of the region, corruption, failure to provide basic services and the lack of economic prospects for young people combine to provide fertile grounds for extremist groups. The impacts of climate change cause shocks and stresses that exacerbate the risks of intercommunal violence, including by contributing to competition over scarce resources, and serious organized crime networks

often operating across national boundaries exacerbate instability and prey on local communities in the absence of State authority.

Tackling those challenges requires a comprehensive approach across all three pillars of the United Nations system — peace and security, development and human rights — and it requires coordinated work on the part of all partners. We recognize the important role of regional efforts to tackle terrorist groups, including through the task force deployed to help the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), just as we commend the efforts of regional organizations, including the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

For our part, the United Kingdom is set to deploy 250 personnel to Mali in 2020 in order to provide vital long-range reconnaissance capabilities to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. We have contributed over \$6.6 million in bilateral funding to support the operationalization of the MNJTF and \$2.4 million to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We are working closely with West African partners to support nationally and locally led conflict prevention efforts to prevent both extremism and intercommunal violence, for example, in northern Nigeria. United Kingdom development funding, worth nearly \$50 million over five years, is currently supporting initiatives to increase economic opportunities for marginalized youth. In Borno state, we are providing a further \$28 million in funding for projects to reduce young people's vulnerability to recruitment by violent extremist groups.

However, while individual initiatives like this matter, we know that long-term solutions to instability are grounded in prosperous and inclusive economies. To that end, the United Kingdom is proud to be hosting the United Kingdom-Africa Investment Summit, on 20 January in London, in order to mobilize high-quality international investment for the region.

We need to also deliver long-term solutions because there are no quick fixes to such complex issues. While States must, of course, take the lead in delivering for their citizens and finding political solutions to conflicts, there is more the United Nations can do to support them. A coherent whole-of-United Nations approach is required. That should include work by United Nations country teams to support national efforts to prevent violent extremism from taking hold,

following a proper assessment of national capacities, capabilities and resources.

We are keen to see more coherent coordination among the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations development actors in the region. We should continue our work through the counterterrorism and sanctions committees to deny terrorists access to arms and funding and to bring them to justice, as well as supporting Member States in strengthening their own counter-terrorism frameworks and capacities. We should also scale up efforts to address the root causes of instability in the region through focused and coordinated peacebuilding programmes. In that regard, we are very pleased that the Secretary-General has recently reapproved Mali's eligibility for access to peacebuilding funds. The United Kingdom remains one of the biggest supporters of the Peacebuilding Fund, having doubled our contribution to \$43 million in 2018, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission to leverage those resources to the benefit of communities facing the challenges of intercommunal violence and terrorism.

I have had the privilege to serve in West Africa and to travel extensively around the countries of the region. This is an issue that is very close to my heart. I think we need to focus on three particular areas, and the United Nations needs to come together to focus more fundamentally on them. Essentially, the three ingredients are security, good governance and economic growth and development. We have already talked about security. Progress will not be made unless States can provide security within their territory and can work together across boundaries and borders to deliver security within the region. We need to work together to help them build that capacity. Security will be sustained only if Governments work to deliver good governance and the rule of law. Many of us have spoken about that, and we set it out very clearly in Sustainable Development Goal 16. Good governance is the key precursor to investment and growth. Investment and growth, when they come, can help deliver the third ingredient, which is economic growth and development. It lifts people out of poverty and stops them from being tempted down the routes and path of violence.

We have heard everyone talk about those things today; the challenge is how we deliver them. I think, in that regard, that it was very interesting to hear the African Union Commissioner talk about the concept

of a reset in order to look again at all the multiple initiatives that we have across the region — there were 15 or so mentioned — and see how we can bring greater coherence to them so that the United Nations and the region can work better together to deliver them.

For our part, the United Kingdom will continue to play our role in partnership with the United Nations and with all our friends across the West African region.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I thank the United States presidency for putting this topic on the agenda. I would have liked to discuss it even more with the curtains open, as was the case at the very beginning of this presidency.

Let me start by expressing Germany's condolences to the Government and the people of the Niger after the horrendous attack that we witnessed last week.

I would like to thank the briefers. I was very happy to hear that they had the same analysis and conclusions on the situation. They both described the gravity of the situation. Mr. Chambas said that the violence we are witnessing is unprecedented and Mr. Chergui said that the situation is worsening. When it comes to the analysis, I think almost everybody around the table can see that the root cause, as we mentioned by our United Kingdom colleague, is the deficit in governance and the State's inability to provide basic services and security to its population. The numbers are just terrible. Some 2,800 schools are closed in the region, the justice system does not work, and we see corruption in most of the countries, the marginalization of the population and disadvantaged youth, among other issues.

My analysis of the situation differs from that of our Russian colleague and I would only suggest that, over the Christmas break, we look into a study conducted in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, which contains very good statistics and examples of the situation in the area. It was already bad in 2017 and since then it has worsened. I think that the analysis in the UNDP study remains absolutely true. It highlights governance deficit as linked with gender inequality, which is still a nightmare, and I am also happy that almost everybody finally recognizes the security implications of climate change.

Now, when it comes to consequences to be drawn, individual States must be primarily responsible for resolving their own problems, and they can only be supported to that end. I was very encouraged by what

we heard from the briefers with regard to the support of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. Everyone is concentrating on the issue and I think it must go hand in hand with cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations. Within the United Nations, we must have a one United Nations approach. When we visited some of the countries earlier this year, my impression was that there was good cooperation among the different United Nations agencies.

I would also like to highlight what Mr. Chergui and others said with regard to taking a holistic approach. There is no military solution to this problem if we do not resolve the basic political issues and if we do not get back to or really achieve good governance. Governments have to respect human rights. Governments have to respect international humanitarian law. We have to re-establish trust and confidence in the Governments of the region. If there is no justice system, people will have no trust in their Government. We have to fight corruption; the income disparities in Africa are also too high, and we must do more to protect schools. I think one of the main issues for the military and security forces is to make sure that children can go to school. One must also listen to civil society. Governments have to include women in decision-making in all bodies that make decisions and look after young people. Military security efforts have a chance to succeed only if good governance is provided.

Germany is engaged in all of this. We have spent millions and millions of euros. The Chancellor has visited the region several times and the Foreign Minister has done so too. We really emphasize the importance of stabilizing the region. We are therefore doing all we can to strengthen confidence in the rule of law and the security forces, fight transborder organized crime, improve migration management, prevent and fight against radicalization and extremism and establish social coherence at the local level.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. We also extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Chambas and Mr. Chergui for their valuable briefings. We appreciate the role played by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), under the leadership of Mr. Chambas, who is working to achieve progress in many areas, including the reduction of political tensions, governance and

the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

I join my fellow speakers in extending my sincere condolences to the Government of the Niger and the families of the victims of the terrorist attack that took place last Tuesday in that country, killing 71 of its soldiers. We wish a speedy recovery to those injured. The attack demonstrates the magnitude of the security challenges facing the region as a whole.

West Africa and the Sahel are dealing with many challenges, including the spread of terrorist activities and weapons, climate change and the illegal drug trade, all of which contribute to destabilization in the region. Discussions on those challenges must address the root causes, and progress must be made in the areas of development, creating economic opportunities for people and strengthening governance. There are a number of regional, international and United Nations initiatives aimed at achieving development, and it is important to coordinate all of those efforts to ensure their success, as that will contribute to building confidence between the Governments and the peoples of the region and to fighting the phenomenon of violent extremism, building on the military gains achieved by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force. For its part, Kuwait has contributed to supporting development in West Africa by providing financing for various development projects — almost \$640 million over the past five years — through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

There are also challenges that contribute directly to increasing violence within societies in West Africa, such as conflicts between farmers and herders, climate change and the lack of State authorities in remote areas — a phenomenon that has spread to a number of West African countries. Therefore, our focus should be on issues related to social welfare and development efforts. There is also an urgent need for social reconciliation between the various communities and for initiatives aimed at ensuring peaceful coexistence between communities for the sake of stability in the region. We have seen such measures taken in Mali, with the signing of reconciliation agreements between the Government and representatives of a number of Mali's central communities.

The United Nations has many offices and missions in West Africa. The most prominent among them is

UNOWAS, which plays a pivotal role in the region as a whole and needs our support to strengthen its mandate and mobilize the resources necessary to enable it to fulfil its responsibilities as effectively as possible. It also provides support for the countries of the region in their quest to counter the challenges they face and builds their capacities to combat terrorism, organized crime and illegal trafficking.

United Nations peacekeeping missions play an important role in the protection of civilians and support for Governments in the preparation of plans to prevent intercommunity violence and achieve stability. We also welcome the efforts made by the countries of the region within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States, which issued a pledge in September to commit to its decision to strengthen the role of dialogue in the reduction of tensions among societies and to ensure the involvement of women, young people and religious leaders in that process, given that, together with civil society organizations, they play a fundamental role in achieving tolerance, moderation and coexistence.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the fact that the role of the United Nations is not limited to those countries suffering from conflict, but is also crucial to preventing conflict, the deterioration of situations and relapse into conflict. UNOWAS is dedicated to that area and we have seen how effective its role has been in Burkina Faso in response to the deteriorating situation there, and in the Gambia after the presidential elections in 2017. We invite UNOWAS to continue working along those lines and reiterate our full support for its endeavours.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for choosing to address the issue of intercommunal violence and violent extremism in West Africa. I also thank our two briefers for their statements.

The situation in the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin is extremely alarming. Grave intercommunal violence is reported almost every day and the threat of terrorism continues to spread. In that regard, I extend France's condolences following the 11 December attack on the Nigerien army. Civilians are the first to suffer in such situations, especially women and children. The humanitarian situation is deteriorating, particularly in Burkina Faso, with the threat extending to the States of the Gulf of Guinea.

We are all aware of the root causes of the instability. Economic fragility, weak States, the growth of trafficking and even the effects of climate change exacerbate antagonisms between sometimes ancient communities. But criminal and terrorist groups are also weaponizing and profiting from the tensions, in a context of mass distribution of light weapons. The situation continues to deteriorate, despite the support that has been extended. There is therefore an urgent need to act. France calls for collective activation and mobilization.

Within the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole, we must continue to encourage the States concerned to improve their governance and promote social cohesion. It is imperative that the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali be implemented. There has been too much delay and now serious progress needs to be made. Resolution 2480 (2019) identifies clear objectives and we reiterate that all those who may stymie the implementation of the peace agreement will be at risk of sanctions.

The solution lies first and foremost with the States concerned. It is up to them to develop political strategies that combine security measures, a humanitarian response and development initiatives. No one else can do it in their place. However, their resources are limited. We must therefore continue to help them.

It is imperative that we step up our efforts to counter terrorism. France remains committed to those efforts through Operation Barkhane. Following the summit of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) held yesterday in Niamey, President Macron will meet with the Presidents of the five countries of the region in early 2020 to redefine the political and operational framework of our joint action. The Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel, a Franco-German initiative, should help to strengthen the capacities of the countries in the region. It will be officially launched by the end of the first quarter of 2020.

We must support regional initiatives, particularly the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, which has recently seen the pace and effectiveness of its operations increase, but which cannot sustain its action over time without adequate international support, especially in terms of logistics and finance. The United Nations must contribute to that support. France encourages donors that have not yet met their commitments to that Force to do so as soon as possible. Those efforts

are essential, but military struggle is only part of the answer. If it is carried out in isolation of prevention, reconciliation, justice and development measures, it is doomed to failure.

In the face of intercommunity violence, it is important to prevent antagonisms and violent radicalization and to deal with such feelings as soon as they take root. Certain traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have proven to be effective, and it is important to support them. There is a need to deal with the problems of transhumance and conflicts between herders and farmers. Communication is vital. To this end, France has for several years been supporting community radio stations in Mali and has funded training programmes for journalists.

It is also critical to give new legitimacy to the presence of the State. The population is often angry with the central authorities, whose actions do not benefit them. It would therefore be appropriate for States to assist in the provision of public services in remote areas and conduct sustainable development projects there. There also exists under-exploited agricultural potential in the Sahel and around the Lake Chad basin. In Burkina Faso, the French Development Agency has been providing support to the rural sector and the education system for several years. There has been tangible progress there — primary school enrolment rates have risen from 46 per cent in 2001 to 86 per cent in 2016. We must therefore take this opportunity for success and tackle root causes.

It is also necessary that we undertake a massive financial effort in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. France is actively contributing in this regard, with a donation of €1.6 billion to the Sahel Alliance projects portfolio. We have witnessed laudable efforts on the part of the United Nations and other partners, in particular the European Union, which I commend for being the leading donor in the Sahel. Nevertheless, we must do more, and we must act more effectively and efficiently.

I wish to conclude by underscoring, once again, the urgent need to assist the Sahel and West Africa as a whole. The situation is deteriorating unrelentingly and constitutes a threat to international peace and security. We can no longer afford to allow such developments to continue.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, I would like to thank the United States and Côte d'Ivoire for calling this meeting, as well as Special Representative Chambas and African Union Commissioner Chergui for their briefings. We would also like to extend our condolences and prayers to the families of the fallen soldiers of the Niger.

We have heard the briefers and read the report of the Secretary-General earlier this year (S/2019/549), which highlighted, *inter alia*, the volatile security situation in West Africa, which is characterized by intercommunal violence and fuelled by the activities of violent extremist groups. Terrorist and violent extremist groups have also expanded their areas of influence, taking advantage of local grievances and the lack of effective State presence, which has already been mentioned by a number of speakers today.

Despite the efforts of national Governments and regional organizations, the security situation continues to deteriorate, resulting in dire humanitarian conditions, including displacement. In addition, climate change and environmental pressures in the region further exacerbate the situation, which increases the pressure on Governments and perpetuates the cycle of insecurity in the region. Both briefers and Council members have reiterated today that it is imperative to address the root causes of instability. In this regard, I should like to highlight three points.

First, with regard to support for national and regional efforts, Indonesia welcomes the initiatives undertaken by countries in West Africa and the Sahel to combat terrorism through collective security efforts, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force. Such initiatives should continue to be supported. However, in addition to international support, it is important to ensure that such initiatives also enjoy the greater support of the population. One important aspect of what we used to refer to as “winning the hearts and minds of the population” is, of course, ensuring due judicial process in bringing perpetrators to justice. Security forces must also be held accountable for their actions. National Governments should also be supported through capacity-building in the provision of security and protection for their citizens, including through early-warning and early-response mechanisms.

Secondly, we must invest in community engagement and reconciliation. Indonesia considers it the most necessary course of action to reconcile communities

and divided groups in order to prevent further violence. National, regional and international actors must invest in community engagement and reconciliation efforts, thereby bringing together all affected communities. This can be achieved, inter alia, through mediation and dialogue across communal lines to ensure that social and economic grievances are heard. Issues such as land tenure, economic inequality and livelihood must be addressed and discussed, including through the empowerment and reinforcement of cultural and traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution.

My third point concerns the need for sector- and region-wide strategies coupled with international collaboration. Commissioner Chergui alluded to a holistic approach, which I think is an important point. The security response must be part of a greater strategy to counter violent extremism, and I am in favour of the soft approach we have been carrying out in many other parts of the world. Poverty eradication should also be represented within the greater strategy, which should also encompass the enhancement of State presence and capacity, the alleviation of the humanitarian situation, reconstruction, and economic and social development. In addition, the proximity of countries, the cross-border activity of violent extremist groups and other factors increase the possibility of a spillover of insecurity in the region. When we visited the region, we were briefed on the matter of porous borders and the need for international collaboration and assistance for regional organizations.

To conclude, I wish to recall that Council members visited the region earlier this year. We were in various countries in the region and met with local leaders, stakeholders and officials and heard their problems. What is now needed is action in support of the countries of the region, the various United Nations missions on the ground and, of course, regional organizations. I shall never forget when, during our visit to Mali, we heard the plea from a women's non-governmental organization that we translate all the statements we make in this Chamber into concrete actions. Now is the time, and we should make it clear, as many before us have, that we must take decisive action in order to address the situation in a concrete manner. Let us not forget the plea of the people on the ground.

Mr. Trullols Yabra (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas and Mr. Smaïl Chergui for their briefings.

Before I start, we wish to express our sincere condolences to the authorities and the people of the Niger, as well as the families of the victims, in the wake of Wednesday's atrocious terrorist attack against a military camp, which claimed the lives of 71 people. We also wish to convey our condolences to Nigeria following the execution on Friday of four humanitarian workers who had previously been abducted. We condemn those acts in the strongest possible terms.

As we witness, once again, deplorable acts such as the foregoing, we underscore the urgent nature of the issue that brings us together this morning. Unfortunately, it is against a backdrop of pain, a sense of powerlessness and collective insecurity that we must stand ready and alert to try to resolve the situation being endured by the peoples of West Africa and the Sahel, who are the victims of violence in many forms, as well as terrorism.

We are gravely concerned by the dramatic deterioration in the security situation in the region as a result of the spread of violent extremist groups. These groups exacerbate tensions between communities, including between farmers and herders, and are linked to transnational organized-crime networks devoted to trafficking in drugs and persons, maritime piracy and the exploitation of resources, among other crimes. It is clear that the issue of intercommunal violence and other conflicts requires us to tackle the structural causes thereof, including shortcomings in economic and social governance, which in turn undermine the capacity of the authorities to meet such basic needs of the population as food, education, health, water, energy and limited or unequal political representation. Consequently, improving living conditions, particularly for the region's young people — who are estimated to make up 65 per cent of the population and thus constitute a growing majority — is a priority.

Another major issue whose consequences are becoming increasingly palpable is the impact of climate change as a security-risk factor. This impact is tangible for a large part of the population of the region, which, every day, is faced, inter alia, with water scarcity, the decrease of cultivable areas, soil erosion and droughts. All of that affects people's food security, health and livelihoods. It is therefore necessary to continue to support the affected countries in assessing their risks, designing strategies to mitigate them and constructing their resilience.

Particular attention should be paid to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region, which has changed the nature of intercommunal violence, having made it increasingly deadly owing to the increased migration of transhumance flows of farmers and livestock, which, as I just said, is recognized to have been triggered by climate change and the challenges that exist with regard to providing equitable and lasting solutions. When weighing the lines of action to pursue in order to remedy the situation, we encourage collaboration with regional bodies that strengthens local mechanisms with a focus on peacekeeping, consolidating social cohesion and addressing structural causes through, for example, job creation initiatives for rural youth aimed at reducing inequalities and social divisions, as well as addressing the governance deficit in some of those areas.

Given the context of the security crisis in West Africa and the Sahel, particularly in areas where people depend on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods, investment in rural areas is essential to creating opportunities, especially for young people, as a means to prevent and mitigate conflicts over natural resources. From our own experience, our country recognizes and promotes the positive and catalytic impact that rural investment generates.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Economic Community of West African States to promote the systematic participation of women in initiatives to combat terrorism and prevent violent extremism. The role of women as mediators in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding and post-conflict situations, is essential, as is the development of comprehensive strategies to address the structural causes of crises. The Council must continue to work in a unified manner to address the threats, challenges and opportunities in a coordinated and comprehensive manner in the light of their multidimensional nature.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the United States and Côte d'Ivoire for the initiative they have taken in convening this meeting. I also thank Special Representative Chambas and Commissioner Chergui for their briefings.

I would also like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of the recent

violence in the Sahel, including the most recent violence in the Niger.

I would like to begin by echoing the briefing of Mr. Chambas and stress that we must avoid any confusion between terrorism, extremism, intercommunal violence, inter-ethnic conflict, religious conflict and violence of an insurrectional nature. We must not fall into the trap of interpreting the realities that shake the area in a simplistic manner. In particular, we must refrain from stigmatizing any one community.

As many others before me have said, a security response alone will not suffice, even if it is obviously indispensable. The context in the region is well known — climate change, high population growth, social inequalities, insurgency, governance that is weak or even sometimes non-existent, challenges to the legitimacy of the State, increased competition for natural resources, illegal trafficking and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These elements are well described in the 2018 study on conflicts between herders and farmers released by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, whose 20 concrete recommendations address the short, medium and longer term. We know that the solutions exist, and now we must implement them.

A feeling of injustice is a major factor in instability. In West Africa, a very large proportion of what are known as formal court judgments concern land disputes. These judgments are regularly negatively influenced by personal interests or even corruption. The State is therefore not only perceived as biased but, above all, it loses its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. Accordingly, it is not insignificant to note that among the flagship measures put in place in northern Mali during the occupation of that country in 2012 by jihadist insurgents, a particularly violent and abject form of justice was applied. Nomadic communities also experience the same sense of injustice, for example, in the context of rising livestock theft.

For Belgium, the answer to this sentiment of injustice and impunity lies in restoring and strengthening the rule of law by stimulating, where useful, synergies between formal and traditional justice so that they complement each other. It is a concrete way to combat the terrorist narrative, thereby tackling one of the deep roots of the violence. The partnership for security and stability in the Sahel initiative is consistent with idea of

strengthening the legitimacy of the State and therefore deserves our support.

The lack of security for the civilian population is another major vector of the spiralling violence in the region. Militias are being formed to defend their livelihoods, villages and families. This failure of the State requires us — the international community — to continue to strengthen our support for the security and defence forces in West Africa. However, I would stress that it is the primary responsibility of individual States to ensure the safety of their citizens. In the medium term, this involves winning — and sometimes winning back — hearts and minds, as security forces need to be accepted by the people. In order to achieve this end, not only is it obvious that the security forces have to

be effective, but they also have to respect human rights and international humanitarian law.

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

Before I conclude the meeting, I would like to speak in reference to the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation on today's agenda item. The Security Council presidency acknowledges the incorrect title of the item on the agenda for today's meeting. It will therefore be corrected in the record to reflect the correct title of the agenda item, as it appears in the provisional monthly programme of work of the Council, namely, "Peace and security in Africa: Intercommunal violence and terrorism in West Africa".

The meeting rose at noon.