

8. Peace consolidation in West Africa

During the period under review, the Security Council held two meetings in connection with the item entitled “Peace consolidation in West Africa”. The meetings took the form of briefings.²⁹⁰ More information on the meetings, including invitees, speakers, and outcomes, is provided in table below. In addition to the meetings, the Council also held informal consultations of the whole.²⁹¹

On 10 January 2022, Council members heard briefings by the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a lawyer and public policy analyst with Médecins du Monde, on behalf of the People’s Coalition for the Sahel, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).²⁹² In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNODC noted that the Gulf of Guinea region continued to be a priority concern regarding maritime security as incidents in the region accounted for the majority of the global kidnappings of seafarers for ransom. She noted that it was clear that maritime insecurity, illicit flows and the linkages between transnational organized crime and terrorism all represented major obstacles to achieving peace, security and development in West Africa and the Sahel. The Executive Director also informed that the lack of opportunities and frustration were driving more youth to piracy and crime and leaving them more receptive to radicalization narratives, whereas desperate conditions rendered more people vulnerable to human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and more women and girls were at greater risk of exploitation and sexual violence. She said that alongside efforts to provide humanitarian and emergency assistance, and to prevent conflict and promote dialogue, there was the need to encourage political will and increased international support to strengthen comprehensive and cooperative crime responses, which needed to be built on international legal and institutional frameworks, regional partnerships, and national capabilities. Furthermore, she highlighted various ways through which UNODC had been supporting the countries of the region to advance such actions.

²⁹⁰ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II.

²⁹¹ See [A/77/2](#), part II, chap. 31.

²⁹² See [S/PV.8944](#).

While noting that the entire security strategy had failed, the lawyer and public policy analyst with Médecins du Monde addressed the security and the humanitarian situation in the Sahel region. In that context, she proposed a new approach based on “four citizen pillars”. First, she noted that the Sahelian States and the international community needed to put civilians at the heart of their response to the crisis. Secondly, she expressed the view that the international community needed to ensure the implementation of a truly holistic approach addressing the root causes of the crisis. Thirdly, the humanitarian emergency needed to be addressed, and lastly, she stressed the need to fight impunity, as it fuelled the cycle of violence and encouraged recruitment by armed groups.

Presenting the report of the Secretary-General,²⁹³ the Special Representative of the Secretary-General underscored that while there were reasons to celebrate the political progress among various Sahelian countries, the security environment in the region had become more concerning. He noted that one of the major consequences of those security developments was explained by the fact that the region was experiencing a multifaceted humanitarian crisis, characterized by rising food prices, increased poverty due to the COVID pandemic and crop losses due to drought. He made reference to the resurgence of coups d'état, particularly in West Africa, noting that it was frequently due to political practices that were completely out of step with the aspirations of the people. In that context, he commended ECOWAS for its active engagement in the crises in Mali and Guinea and noted the support of UNOWAS towards the efforts to enable a return to constitutional order. The Special Representative further noted the need for a long-term approach regarding climate change as well as more determination in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda as well as the youth and peace and security agenda.

Following the briefings, many Council members expressed concern at the security situation in the region, which was characterized by the recurrence of terrorist attacks, including in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger, and Nigeria. Council members also noted that the attacks were expanding to the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea/West Africa. In that context, Council members underlined the need for a holistic approach that addressed the root causes of instability,

²⁹³ See [S/2021/1091](https://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire).

including relating to governance, development and human rights deficits, and the impact of climate on security.²⁹⁴ Some speakers commended the role of regional security mechanisms such as the Joint Force of the Group of Five and the Multinational Joint Task Force and underlined the need for their further support, especially by ensuring predictable and sustainable funding for the Joint Force.²⁹⁵ With regard to UNOWAS, Council members highlighted its role in supporting regional initiatives to address the issue of terrorism and maintaining peace. Many Council members welcomed the successful holding of presidential elections in Cabo Verde and the Gambia in October and December 2021, respectively. However, some Council members expressed concern at the challenges faced by the political transitions in Mali and Guinea,²⁹⁶ and took note of the role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including through applying sanctions measures.²⁹⁷

On 7 July 2022, Council members heard briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Coordinator of the Association Alliance for Peace and Security.²⁹⁸ Further to the report of the Secretary-General, the Special Representative highlighted the effects of climate change on existing conflicts, noting that extremist and criminal groups in many parts of the Sahel had exploited such weaknesses exacerbated by often inadequate State structures.²⁹⁹ He said that the southward spread of extremist violence had grown from isolated incidents to a genuine threat in coastal countries and that the announced withdrawal of Mali from the Group of Five for the Sahel and the then military redeployments were jeopardizing the security arrangements in the subregion. Additionally, he underlined that there was no magic formula to effectively combat insecurity, and underscored that it was democratic and accountable governance, including the establishment of decentralized administrations that would deliver solutions to the daily lives of the population.

²⁹⁴ See [S/PV.8944](#), Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), Ireland, Albania, China, France, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and United States.

²⁹⁵ France, United Arab Emirates, India, and Norway.

²⁹⁶ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya, Albania, China, France, United Kingdom, United States and Russian Federation).

²⁹⁷ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), France and United States.

²⁹⁸ See [S/PV.9086](#). See also [S/2022/521](#).

²⁹⁹ See [S/PV.9086](#).

He further noted that ECOWAS had reached agreements to end the crisis with the transitional regimes in Mali and Burkina Faso and the relaunching of dialogue with the transitional authorities in Guinea. Highlighting the accomplishments of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, the Special Representative noted that the Mixed Commission would forever remain a concrete model of effective United Nations support for peaceful conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

In her remarks, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission shared the perspective of the Commission on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel by drawing on its country-specific and regional engagements. In that regard, the Chair stated that the Peacebuilding Commission was concerned about the recent military takeovers in the region and the persistence of violent incidents perpetrated by non-State armed groups and terrorist groups. In that context, she elaborated on various recommendations of the Peacebuilding Commission, notably, (i) the importance of investing in efforts to address the root causes that aggravated the conflicts, instability and violence in the region; (ii) the need for greater support for the objectives of the priority investment plan of the Group of Five for the Sahel; (iii) the need for sustained and coordinated support by the United Nations system for building and sustaining peace, including through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel; as well as (iv) the need for the timely follow-up and support for the planned joint strategic assessment on the security and governance situation and response initiatives in the region by the African Union, United Nations, ECOWAS and the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Highlighting the deteriorating situation in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, the Coordinator of the Association Alliance for Peace and Security in her briefing underlined the importance for the international community to “do things differently”, namely, by putting the protection of the population at the heart of any response to the security crisis in the Sahel. She urged the Council to convince Sahelian leaders and Governments to better protect their citizens, by eradicating the reasons that drove young people to take up arms. To achieve that, she underlined the need to improve governance and access to basic social services, the need to fight against stigmatization and impunity, particularly that enjoyed by certain members of defence and security forces, which perpetuated the vicious circle of violence.

During the discussions, Council members continued to express concern at the security situation in the region, which had deteriorated since the meeting in January, reflected by ongoing intercommunal conflicts and increased incidents of terrorist threats and attacks, including their expansion to the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea/West Africa. While drawing attention to the challenges in the region, they underlined the importance of regional cooperation, with some Council members calling for adequate funding of regional initiatives.³⁰⁰ Many Council members expressed concern at the humanitarian situation in the region exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate shocks and food insecurity.³⁰¹ Council members also expressed concern at the abuses and violations of human rights,³⁰² underlined the need to ensure accountability,³⁰³ and called for improved compliance with international human rights standards.³⁰⁴ Several Council members welcomed the democratic progress in the region, including following the successful parliamentary and local elections in Senegal and The Gambia.³⁰⁵ Many speakers also noted the agreement with ECOWAS to implement 12-month and 24-month transition timelines, with Burkina Faso and Mali, respectively. In that regard, Council members welcomed the partial lifting of the sanctions measures on Mali by ECOWAS,³⁰⁶ and further underlined the need to restore constitutional order by holding timely elections.³⁰⁷ Additionally, several Council members underlined the need for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in political processes, including elections and transitions and in consideration of leadership and decision-making posts.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, some Council members welcomed the improvement in the regional maritime security since the meeting in January.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁰ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), India, Albania and China.

³⁰¹ Ireland, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), United Arab Emirates, Albania, Russian Federation, and United Kingdom.

³⁰² Ireland, United States, Albania, and United Kingdom.

³⁰³ Ireland and United Kingdom.

³⁰⁴ United Kingdom.

³⁰⁵ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), India, Albania, United Kingdom, Mexico, France, China,

³⁰⁶ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), Norway, Albania, Russian Federation, Mexico, China, and Brazil.

³⁰⁷ Ireland, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), United States, United Kingdom, and France.

³⁰⁸ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), United Arab Emirates, Albania, United Kingdom, Mexico, and France.

³⁰⁹ Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), Norway, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, China, and Brazil.

Meetings: Peace consolidation in West Africa

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8944 10 January 2022	Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2021/1091)			Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS); Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; lawyer and public policy analyst with <i>Médecins du Monde</i> , on behalf of the People's Coalition for the Sahel	13 Council members ^a , all invitees ^b	
S/PV.9086 7 July 2022	Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2022/521)			Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Coordinator of the Association Alliance for Peace and Security	13 Council members ^a , all invitees	

^a Albania, Brazil, China, France, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Kenya), India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States.

^b The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and lawyer and public policy analyst with *Médecins du Monde* participated in the meeting via videoconference.