

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Cooperation at all levels is crucial to resolve current crises in West Africa

Twenty-fourth high-level meeting of Heads of UN Peace Missions in West Africa

Dakar, 8 October, 2012 - The Heads of the United Nations (UN) Peace Missions in West Africa held their twenty-fourth high-level consultation in Dakar to review progress in the coordination of the activities of the United Nations in promoting peace and stability in the sub-region.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for West Africa (UNOWA). It was attended by Mr. Albert Gérard Koenders, SRSG for Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, SRSG for Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). They welcomed newly appointed Ms. Karin Landgren, SRSG for Liberia (UNMIL) and Mr Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen, Executive Representative for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) who were participating in the meeting for the first time.

The Heads of Missions in West Africa exchanged views on peace and security challenges in the sub-region, including the situation in the Sahel and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and on a number of joint initiatives. They underlined the critical role of cooperation at local, regional and international levels to address cross border and global security issues, in particular those affecting Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, they noted that the complexity of threats to stability in West Africa had aggravated by the recent crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau as well as the scourge of transnational crime, drug and arms trafficking, terrorism and piracy.

On the situation in Mali, the Heads of Missions, welcomed the recent progress made by Malian authorities with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to better articulate their demands for addressing the multifaceted crisis affecting the country, in particular the security and humanitarian threats in the northern part. They welcomed the upcoming meeting of the Follow-up and Support Group on Mali on 19 October 2012 in Bamako to fine-tune plans between Malian, regional and international stakeholders for the stabilization of the country. They welcomed the convening by the Secretary-General of the High level meeting on the Sahel on 26 September that contributed to raise awareness on the challenges affecting the Sahel region and to foster international and coordinated response to the pressing and longer term security and humanitarian threats affecting the Sahel region.

The Heads of Missions expressed concerns on the elections related unrest in Guinea and Togo. They called on all the parties to favor constructive dialogue to find the necessary consensus in order to create the conditions for the holding of peaceful, transparent and fair elections with the support of the UN.

The Heads of Missions reviewed their collaboration on the implementation of a sub-regional security strategy to combat – within a coherent framework - cross-border threats such as movement of weapons and armed groups as well as illicit trafficking, and their impact on local populations, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2000 (2011).

The Heads of Missions welcomed the progress achieved in Côte d'Ivoire since the end of the post-electoral crisis. They also called for initiatives to strengthen political dialogue and reconciliation in the country and underlined the need to support the Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) strategy in the country. The security situation, including trans-border elements, were raised as a source of particular concern, following a range of attacks in the country. It was noted that UNOCI and UNMIL continue to work to strengthen their inter-mission cooperation to address the situation along their common border, including follow up to an inter-mission cooperation roadmap agreed by both missions in March 2012. Work also continues towards a shared border strategy between the two governments, which was initiated during 'Quadripartite' discussions between the two governments and two missions in June, and now requires additional focus.

Through Security Council resolution 2066 (2012), the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was renewed for another year in September. The resolution called for the drawdown of the Mission's military forces by about half of its current almost 8,000 troops. Within this context, the Government of Liberia and UNMIL continue to plan the transition of security responsibilities to national institutions. The Heads of Mission noted that resolution 2066 recognizes that security measures alone will not bring stability to the country, and calls on UNMIL to support political processes, such as reconciliation, constitutional reform and implementation of decentralization policies for the stability of the country.

With regard to Guinea-Bissau, the Heads of Missions commended the recent advocacy and mediation efforts made by the UN and the African Union (AU) aimed at re-activating dialogue and harmonizing the positions of the country's international partners, particularly ECOWAS and Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), with the support of the EU and within the framework of Security Council resolution 2048 (2012). They emphasized the key national leadership role that needs to be played by the various actors in Guinea-Bissau in resolving the political deadlock and they welcomed the recent initial contacts between the country's deposed and transitional authorities in New York. They encouraged further efforts be pursued with a view to ensuring an inclusive transition process and genuine inclusive national dialogue which will foster a lasting basis for return to constitutional order, Security Sector Reform, fighting against impunity and drug trafficking. It was reiterated that the military should adhere to civilian rule, refrain from interfering with political and judicial affairs, and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Heads of Missions noted the importance of presidential, parliamentary and local elections in Sierra Leone scheduled for 17 November 2012 for the country's continued progress. The Heads of Missions expressed support for the efforts of UNIPSIL in assisting national efforts at promoting dialogue and ensuring free, fair and violence-free elections.

On the fight against the trafficking of illicit drugs and other aspects of organized crime, the heads of missions welcomed the decision by ECOWAS Heads of State at the 41st Summit on 28-29 June to extend the 2008-2011 ECOWAS Regional Plan of Action (RAP) against drug trafficking, organized crime, and drugs abuse. They expressed the readiness of the UN to support the review and the implementation of the plan led by ECOWAS. In that regard, they called for enhanced financial and technical support for the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI), a joint UN -ECOWAS program created in support of the plan of action. They also underlined the need to enhance regional and national ownership for the program's implementation, and to ensure its sustainability. The first phase of WACI includes the establishment of Transnational Crime Units, which are operational in Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The process is in development in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

The Heads of Missions underscored their determination to continue joining efforts and working closely in order to contribute to the resolution of crises, consolidate peace and enhance development in West Africa. They called on the leadership of the sub-region to continue assuming greater ownership of peace consolidation efforts. In that context, they reiterated their support to regional organizations such as Mano River Union (MRU) and the ECOWAS in their efforts towards peace and stability.

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