

PRESS RELEASE

Said Djinnit meets with President Alassane Ouattara, President of Côte d'Ivoire and Chairman of ECOWAS

Abidjan, 8 March, 2012 - The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit held a meeting in Abidjan with Côte d'Ivoire President Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara who is also the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). He also met with the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Daniel Kablan Duncan, and the Minister in charge of Regional integration, Mr. Adama Bictogo.

Said Djinnit congratulated President Ouattara on his election as the head of ECOWAS Authority and reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to fully support ECOWAS's efforts towards peace, development and security in West Africa.

Djinnit and Ouattara reviewed the situation in the sub-region. The SRSG highlighted United Nations determination to strengthen its partnership with ECOWAS in order to effectively tackle new threats to stability, including piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as food crisis and insecurity in the Sahel region.

"West Africa is facing challenges from two fronts which have the potential to destabilize the entire sub-region. Its northern borders are affected by the crisis in the Sahel which severely impacts on the situation in Mali. Its southern borders, along the Atlantic Ocean, undergo the rampant piracy phenomenon and organized crime which will eventually threaten the economic development of the sub-region," Said Djinnit declared. In this regard, the organization a regional summit to define a global strategy against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea was discussed with President Ouattara. The summit would be organized in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea, the African Union and the United Nations. Such initiative is in accordance with the resolution 2039 (2012) of United Nations Security Council adopted on 29 February 2012 and with the decision of the 40th ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Summit which took place in Abuja on 17 February.

The Special Representative also expressed his will to work in close cooperation with President Ouattara and the new President of ECOWAS Commission on other issues of concern, as well as on ways and means to strengthen mechanisms for sub-regional stability, including during election processes. They also discussed the implementation of a sub-regional strategy in the Mano River region, to tackle various threats to the stability of the sub region, in particular the cross border movements of armed groups and weapons between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Said Djinnit's visit to Abidjan was also part of a high-level consultation between peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. On this occasion, a roadmap was adopted by UNOCI and UNMIL, specifying the terms of their collaboration to strengthen security on the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. The roadmap will serve as a basis for the sub regional security strategy.

On the occasion of the international women's day, the Special Representative took the opportunity of his visit in Abidjan to pay tribute to women for their role in consolidating peace in Côte d'Ivoire as well as in the Mano River and ECOWAS regions.

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