



# Security Council

## SC/10706

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Security Council - 6804<sup>th</sup> Meeting\* (AM)

### **DESPITE PROGRESS IN CONSOLIDATING PEACE, WEST AFRICA NOW CONFRONTS 'NEW WAVE**

### **OF CHALLENGES' TO GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT PREVENTION, SECURITY COUNCIL TOLD**

#### **Special Representative Highlights Crises in Mali, Guinea-Bissau; Head of UN Drug Office Describes Region's Growing Illicit Drug Traffic, Use**

Despite significant progress in consolidation of peace in West Africa, recent seizures of power, armed insurrection, piracy, terrorist threats and increased illicit drug traffic meant that the security situation was “precarious and reversible” and continued international assistance was critical in support of regional efforts, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative told the Security Council this afternoon

“West Africa is confronted with a new wave of challenges to governance, peace consolidation and conflict prevention,” Said Djinnit, who is also the head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, said in a session that also heard from Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Introducing the Secretary-General’s latest report on the subregion (see Background), Mr. Djinnit said that the threats were exemplified by the ongoing crises in the Sahel, especially in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, as well as the overall threat posed by transnational organized crime and terrorism.

In Mali, he said, the Islamist militant group Ansar Dine and other terrorist groups had taken control of the northern part of the country, resulting in deterioration of the humanitarian situation, alleged gross human rights violations and the destruction of endangered historical Muslim sites in Timbuktu. Meanwhile in the capital Bamako, despite laudable efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), transitional arrangements for return to constitutional order had yet to be consolidated, prompting ECOWAS leaders to fast-track deployment of a standby force there.

Noting that the Malian Prime Minister expressed opposition to deployment of the force in Bamako, maintaining that ECOWAS should focus its efforts on assisting the country to recover its territorial integrity, he said that it was critical to ensure the security and return of interim President Dioncounda Traore, as was demanded in the recent ECOWAS summit and echoed in last week’s Security Council resolution. A consequent meeting of the ECOWAS Contact Group of Heads of State on 7 July reconfirmed the priorities of the summit and the resolution. At that meeting, the ECOWAS mediation disclosed that it had had initial contacts with rebel groups, in preparation for talks with a Malian national body that is yet to be established.

He commented that it was important to resolve the divergences with the current Government of Mali, while remaining respectful of the centrality of the Malian institutions and of the leading role played so far by ECOWAS. At the same time, it was crucial to stress the collective dimension of the deep vulnerability of the Sahel region. He was confident that the forthcoming African Union summit in Addis Ababa would help in reaching a consolidated African position on both issues.

In regard to United Nations strategies in that context, he said that the Dakar-based Regional Inter-agency Task Force had been set up and was developing an action plan to strengthen the resilience of the countries of the Sahel at the local, national and regional levels. In addition, UNOWA and the Dakar-based agencies would support the development of a comprehensive regional strategy consistent with the Council’s demand in resolution 2056 (2012).

West Africa, he said, also continued to face piracy in the Gulf of Guinea that bore the potential to significantly impede economic development and disrupt international maritime routes. Planning for a regional summit and preparation of a road

map were under way, with the participation of UNOWA, ECOWAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) and the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

He said that the vulnerability of the Mano River Union subregion was shown by a recent upsurge of violence at the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, causing many civilian deaths, as well as the death of seven United Nations peacekeepers. Representatives of both countries met subsequently, along with representatives of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and agreed to intensify coordinated border patrols and reinforce their respective Militaries and Police border deployment.

UNOWA was, in addition, assisting the Governments of the Mano River Basin to preserve the hard-won achievements of recent years, in close cooperation with the peacekeeping missions in the region, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union, through initiating a cooperation process to face the threats posed by mercenaries, armed groups, weapons proliferation and displacement in border areas, as part of a sub-regional security strategy.

Emphasizing the importance of preventing elections related violence in West Africa, he said that the consolidation of Senegal's democratic experiment provided reasons for hope, but a number of worrying signals were emanating from other countries where elections were soon to be held. It would be key to continue to impress upon the leadership of those countries the need to create conducive conditions for peaceful and credible elections, through genuine, inclusive dialogue that was able to incorporate the grievances of opposition voices.

Finally, he said he would continue to advocate with major partners, such as the European Union and the United States, for more timely and substantive efforts to overcome the threats posed by drug cartels and other criminal networks, which were able to undermine State institutions, as demonstrated by the situations in Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Updating the Council on those threats, Mr. Fedotov said that the threat was increasing both in terms of illicit traffic through the area and in drug use in West Africa itself. In 2011, he reported, around 30 tons of cocaine were trafficked to the region — but only 2.7 kilograms were seized by law enforcement in Guinea-Bissau during the same period. There was also an increase in heroin, with 400 kilograms seized in the region in 2011, up from 20 kilograms in 2008. Methamphetamine laboratories, in addition, had been recently discovered.

A full threat assessment for West Africa would be issued later in the year, he said, while stressing that the region had become more and more a final destination for drugs, with up to 2.3 million cocaine users in West and Central Africa. That meant there was a greater need for prevention and treatment, as well as a focus on HIV/AIDS. Also, drug money was being reinvested to feed other criminality in the region.

In regard to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, he said that 16 attacks were recorded so far in 2012, following 49 in 2011 and 36 in 2010. As a follow-up to the United Nations assessment mission on the scourge, UNODC was integrating maritime security into Benin's national programmes.

UNODC, he said, was also carefully monitoring terrorism in the region and possible links with transnational organized crime, reporting that the northern part of Mali was a potential safe haven for terrorists and other criminal groups. Fully supporting the Council's endorsement of ECOWAS mediation in Mali, he said that if it was successful, the Office would be able to restart operation in the country that were suspended following the March coup d'état. The situation in Guinea-Bissau remained a serious concern as well, with fears over the connections between elements of the military and drug traffickers and a culture of impunity hindering effective law enforcement.

UNODC, he said, was building political commitment in West Africa through regional platforms as well as developing inter-agency approaches and integrated regional programmes. The West African Coast Initiative (WACI) offered technical assistance in law enforcement, border management and justice reform and other areas. Under that initiative, UNDOC was working at the field level with UNOWA, other United Nations entities, Interpol and others. He welcomed, in that context, the renewal of the ECOWAS Regional Plan of Action.

UNODC was also drafting, with the Department of Political Affairs, the Secretary-General's report on the impact of transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel region, as requested by the Council. At the same time, the United Nations Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking was also promoting inter-agency collaboration. UNODC was working with the Peacebuilding Commission to help mainstream drugs and crime as a threat to peacebuilding across the region.

In the area of operations, he said the "REFCO" network of prosecutors, in Central America since 2011, would soon be partnered with a similar network in West Africa. The Office also co-managed the Global Container Control Programme,

and had established Transnational Crime Units in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, to build judicial and forensic capacity and capability to intercept money being laundered. He pledged UNODC's continued work with partners to build commitment and develop necessary solutions "in this extremely fluid and fast-moving environment".

The meeting began at 3:35 p.m. and ended at 4:01 p.m., at which time Council members were invited into consultations on West Africa, as previously agreed.

### Background

The Council had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (document [S/2012/510](#)), which covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2012, providing an overview of national, cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and outlining the activities undertaken by the Office, known as UNOWA, in the areas of preventive diplomacy, early warning and capacity-building to address emerging challenges to peace and stability in the subregion. It also outlines the Office's coordination efforts in that context with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and the African Union.

The reporting period, the Secretary-General states, was marked by unconstitutional changes of power in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, conflict in northern Mali and an "overall deteriorating situation in the Sahel". Several cross-cutting and cross-border challenges in the region, in addition, if left unaddressed, could further undermine stability and ultimately reverse the peace dividends achieved over the past few years. In this context, he calls the commitment and determination demonstrated by the new ECOWAS leadership and other regional leaders "noteworthy", pledging UNOWA's continued close work with them and continued work on development of a common strategy on the Sahel region consistent with the joint United Nations-African Union position.

In Mali, a full and lasting return to constitutional order and the implementation of a road map for the 12-month transitional period agreed to by ECOWAS and the transitional authorities must be pursued, he said, calling on the country's military to refrain from any actions that could undermine the transition. The road map must also include the organization of elections and the restoration of State authority in the north, which, he says, is "in the grip of criminal and extremist groups", as well as the restructuring and reorganization of the armed forces. He calls on Member States to fully support the efforts of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations in that regard.

On Guinea, he welcomes efforts to foster dialogue to address political tensions. He calls "a key priority" the timely holding of free, fair and peaceful legislative elections. He appeals to the ruling and opposition parties to exercise flexibility to arrive at an early consensus on modalities for the polls, and encourages all stakeholders to remain engaged in the national reconciliation process, confirming continued United Nations commitment in all those areas, as well as the deployment of the senior security sector reform adviser and his team in response to the country's request in that important area.

On other countries, he welcomes the successful conclusion of the electoral processes in Senegal, despite the tensions of the pre-electoral period, as well as what he calls positive efforts of the political leadership in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to address political divergences that emerged in the wake of their respective electoral processes. He calls on political actors in the region to create conditions conducive to the conduct of peaceful and credible elections.

He urges all the countries of the subregion, in addition, to swiftly implement existing instruments to address the growing threat of transnational organized crime, encouraging the establishment of a secretariat on drugs and crime within the ECOWAS Commission. He also encourages ECOWAS, with the support of UNOWA, to finalize and adopt the subregional political framework and plan of action on security sector governance and reform that has been under discussion since 2009.

He encourages all stakeholders to sustain the momentum in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, calling on the international community to provide necessary assistance. He also encourages ECOWAS to finalize and adopt the sub-regional counter-terrorism framework, calling for international support to meet that threat. Finally, he encourages Cameroon and Nigeria to respect the schedule of meetings that they had set to complete demarcation of the land boundary between them.

\* \* \* \* \*

\* The 6801<sup>st</sup>-6803<sup>rd</sup> Meetings were closed.