

PRESS RELEASE

Said Djinnit reiterates UN support to ECOWAS

Abuja, 8 April 2013 – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa, Said Djinnit attended the 9th Annual Development Partners Coordination Meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja. The purpose of the three day meeting was to discuss challenges in West Africa and the economic integration process. ECOWAS bilateral and multilateral partners such as the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the UN were invited to reinforce areas of cooperation.

“Long-term stability in West Africa can only be achieved through strengthened democratic and economic governance combined with enhanced regional integration,” declared Said Djinnit at the opening ceremony. He lauded progress made by the ECOWAS Commission despite daunting challenges posed by the crisis in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

The Special Representative reiterated the support of the UN, including through the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), to the efforts of the regional organization towards peace and stability. He underlined the tremendous efforts deployed by the ECOWAS Commission and Authority to activate the standby Force, in response to the crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, which led to the deployment of AFISMA. “It will undoubtedly form a solid framework for a swift transition to a UN peacekeeping operation, as proposed under the options put forward by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council,” he said.

In the area of democratic processes and electoral assistance, Said Djinnit observed that “the nexus between elections and stability remains a challenge. No efforts should be spared to collectively build up mechanisms for the conduct of credible and transparent electoral processes”. The UN will continue to work with ECOWAS to achieve that goal, including through the implementation of the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa (2011) and the conduct of joint early warning missions.

“The UN-ECOWAS coordination will also continue to expand to combat cross-border threats in the sub-region region, which is increasingly exposed to drug trafficking, organized crime, piracy and terrorism”. In this regard, he welcomed the two year extension of the Regional Action Plan Against Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Drugs Abuse. He also welcomed the up-coming ECOWAS–ECCAS Summit of Heads of State, which is scheduled in May in Yaoundé (Cameroon) to adopt a joint strategy to fight piracy and maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2039 (2012). Said Djinnit reiterated support for the implementation of the Regional Common Strategy on the Fight Against Terrorism, as part of the UN global strategy on terrorism.

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