



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA

UNOWA

BUREAU DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST

**Briefing to the Security Council on the 15th Report of the Secretary-General
on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA)**

by SRSG Mohamed Ibn Chambas

New York, 7 July 2015

Mr. President,

Distinguished Council Members,

1. I am pleased to be here today to brief you on the situation in West Africa and the implementation of UNOWA's mandate. Further to the 15th report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) which is before you, I would like to highlight few issues and update you on the most recent developments.

2. The general picture in West Africa today is that of, first, continuous concerns regarding the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin area and its humanitarian impact, in spite of progress made by the affected countries in the fight against Boko Haram; second, continuing risks of instability in several West African nations, in the lead up to their presidential elections later in the year, following the resounding success in the Nigerian electoral process; Lastly, trans-national organized crime and the Ebola Virus Disease still remain a matter of serious concern in spite of continuing national, regional and international efforts to curb these threats. These are areas that will continue to guide our preventive diplomacy and good offices efforts in the months to come.

Mr. President,

3. Since May, the Boko Haram insurgency has stepped up its attacks and violence in the Lake Chad Basin Area mainly against civilian targets, leading to new deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations. Although the structure and capacity for conventional war of Boko Haram has been destroyed, the terror group continues to perpetrate violent attacks and rampages in Nigeria but also Niger and Chad, as illustrated in recent weeks. This underscores the necessity for continued vigilance and coordinated regional action. In this regard the unprecedented solidarity exemplified by the joint military operations carried out by Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon against Boko Haram since January, with the support of international partners, is indeed commendable.

4. Immediately after his inauguration, President Buhari visited Niger and Chad on 3 and 4 June to initiate high level consultations and galvanize support for fight against Boko Haram. On 11 June, an Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission member countries plus Benin took place in Abuja, where far-reaching decisions were taken to accelerate the effective operationalization of the multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). To ensure continuity in the war effort, more support from all partners remains crucial. In the longer term, addressing the root causes of the insurgency constitutes a condition for lasting stability. A coordinated post-conflict strategy is required to help restore normal living conditions and organize the return of refugee and displaced people that the conflict has caused.

5. While the Boko Haram-related insecurity has impeded field assessment in their northern areas, I am pleased to report that in the context of the Cameroun-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which I chair on behalf of the United Nations, the two countries have not relented on completing the demarcation of their common land boundary. As the CNMC is actively preparing to initiate Confidence-building projects in favour of Cameroon and Nigeria populations adversely affected by the demarcation, I should note that the UN support team has already

outlined a completion strategy which establishes specific timetables and projections for concluding the work of the commission, and for passing responsibility for residual and follow up activities to a bi-lateral commission exclusively composed by the two countries.

6. In Guinea, the inter-Guinean political dialogue kicked off on 19 June, with the international partners including the UN sitting as observers. Subsequently, however, the Representative of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) and I assumed an informal facilitation role at the request of Government facilitators and the parties. It is pertinent to note that the contentious issue of the sequencing of the elections has been resolved in favour of the presidential election holding before the communal/local elections. Longstanding contentious elements dividing the government and the opposition are now being addressed, notably strengthening the technical capacity of the CENI, a credible electoral register and the monitoring and evaluation of the preparations of the presidential elections with the support of the UN, ECOWAS, OIF, bi and multilateral partners.

7. One remaining major challenge is the financial and expertise gap that needs to be bridged for the electoral process in Guinea to be on course. Time is of the essence, given that we have only about four months to the date of the presidential elections. While a number of partners have made pledges, it is expedient that these promises are redeemed soonest.

8. Concerning Burkina Faso, the International Group for Support and Assistance to the Transition in Burkina Faso (GISAT-BF) met on 12 June 2015 in the margins of the 25th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Johannesburg. The Group noted progress in the preparation for elections, notably with the completed revision of the voters' register. Meanwhile, there are concerns regarding what is emerging as a fragile equilibrium of the transition and in particular the underlying tensions between Prime Minister Zida and the Presidential Security Regiment (RSP). Our concerns increased following recent incident on 29 June when elements of the RSP reportedly attempted to arrest Prime Minister Zida upon his return from a foreign trip. Several gun shots were heard in the Regiment's camp that evening. I should, however, mention the commendable efforts by President Kafando in appeasing the situation and in keeping the transition on track towards the holding of presidential election on 10 October. Meanwhile, I plan to visit Ouagadougou upon my return to the region, jointly with the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Commission and the AU commissioner for Peace and Security in our capacity as co-chairs of the International Group for Support and Assistance to the Transition in Burkina Faso (GISAT-BF).

Mr. President,

9. Before I conclude, let me draw your attention to the continuous challenges posed by the Ebola virus disease in the region. On 24 June, UNOWA facilitated a telephone conference between the Mano River Union Secretariat and peace missions in the region, during which were emphasized the difficulties met in border areas, as none of the security and confidence-building mechanisms are operational, and restrictions due to Ebola continue to affect local livelihoods. Despite significant achievements in the fight against Ebola, Guinea and Sierra Leone are yet to attain zero case situations. Most worrisome is that, after declaring a zero case situation on 9 May, Liberia has detected three new cases; the last was confirmed on 28 June. There have been remarkable examples of solidarity between the neighbors in facing the Ebola crisis. With the epidemics still active, and in a sensitive political context especially in Guinea, the resources in place since 2014, including UNMEER's, remain essential towards achieving the goal of zero Ebola case.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Council Members,

I thank you for your attention.