

8. Peace consolidation in West Africa

During the period under review, the Security Council held two meetings under the item “Peace consolidation in West Africa”. One of the meetings took the form of a briefing and the other meeting was convened for the adoption of a decision.²⁷⁰ More information on the meetings, including invitees, speakers and outcomes, are provided in table 1 below.²⁷¹ In addition, Council members held two open videoconferences in connection with this item.²⁷² More information on the videoconferences is included in table 2 below. In 2021, the Secretary-General appointed a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).²⁷³

On 11 January 2021, the Council held a videoconference in connection with this item.²⁷⁴ At the videoconference, the members heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS.²⁷⁵ During his briefing to the Council, he stressed that it was ever-more important to collaborate to apply the manifold lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of improving governance and delivering essential services for societies to emerge more adept, secure and resilient. With regard to the Sahel, he noted that insecurity continued to prevail and to harm innocent lives and, as a result, the humanitarian situation had been further aggravated. Since his previous report to the Council in July 2020,²⁷⁶ five presidential, three legislative and two local elections were held in West Africa, and electoral management bodies had been able to maintain the electoral calendar despite the pandemic and demonstrated impressive technical capacity to organize and conduct elections. He covered specific developments in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Niger, and Mauritania. The Special Representative reiterated that, in addressing the multidimensional challenges in the Sahel, UNOWAS was closely collaborating with the Group

²⁷⁰ For more information on format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

²⁷¹ See [A/76/2](#), part II, chap. 31. See [S/2021/1014](#) and [S/2021/938](#).

²⁷² For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

²⁷³ See [S/2021/275](#) and [S/2021/276](#).

²⁷⁴ See [S/2021/43](#). See also [S/2021/1014](#).

²⁷⁵ See [S/2021/43](#).

²⁷⁶ See [S/2020/706](#).

of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to support the implementation of the priority investments programme and the Lake Chad Basin Commission Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy. Concerning women and youth in the region who had been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, he stated that a joint assessment conducted by UNOWAS in collaboration with ECOWAS on the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) had showed progress in the areas of coordination and programming. In this regard, the Special Representative also highlighted that political will and resources to implement the various instruments, especially education for girls which remained a critically important lever or development, had to remain a priority.

In the statements that followed the briefing, many Council members expressed concern about the significant levels of violence and the resulting continued instability across the region, including terrorist activities, intercommunal conflicts, and election-related violence.²⁷⁷ In this context, Council members highlighted that the international community, as well as the Security Council and UNOWAS, needed to support enhanced national and regional capacities and initiatives. Specifically, some Council members highlighted the need for greater support to the Joint Force of the G-5 for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force.²⁷⁸ Several Council members also shared the concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region.²⁷⁹ To tackle the root causes of violence and promoting regional peace and stability, Council members reiterated the need for a holistic approach, and strengthening coordination with United Nations agencies, development partners and other regional and subregional organizations.²⁸⁰ In several statements, Council members also emphasized the importance of addressing the adverse effects of climate change on security in West Africa and the Sahel, integrating current and projected climate-related threats into all conflict-prevention efforts in the region.²⁸¹ Welcoming the participation levels of women in political processes in the region,

²⁷⁷ India, Ireland, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Mexico, Russian Federation, United States and Viet Nam.

²⁷⁸ France, India, Ireland and Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia).

²⁷⁹ Estonia, India, Ireland, Mexico, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

²⁸⁰ China, Estonia, India, Ireland, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia) and United Kingdom.

²⁸¹ Estonia, Ireland, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Norway, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

Council members encouraged further steps in ensuring full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth at all levels of decision-making.²⁸²

On 3 February 2021, Council members held a videoconference to announce the issuance of a presidential statement in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of a civilian Joint Project between UNOWAS and relevant regional organizations such as the G-5 Sahel, ECOWAS and the African Union, with the aim of stemming the increasingly destabilizing phenomenon of intercommunal violence and preventing its recurrence in the region, and encouraged support to such a project from bilateral and development partners.²⁸³ The Council also requested the Secretary-General to include in his next report on UNOWAS recommendations with viable options for establishing such a project, as well as for the Special Representative to provide an update on these recommendations in his next briefing. In the presidential statement, condemning all forms of violence and intimidation against those participating in humanitarian operations, the Council encouraged efforts by States in the region to ensure that perpetrators of such acts were brought to justice, as provided for by national laws and their obligations under international law.²⁸⁴ In addition, the Council expressed concern at the threat that piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea posed to international navigation, security and development in the region and welcomed the work of UNOWAS on regional cooperation in response.²⁸⁵ The Council also urged all parties to armed conflict to immediately cease attacks and threats of attacks in contravention of applicable international humanitarian law against schools, children, and educational personnel, to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education, as well as to take all feasible measures to protect schools and children.²⁸⁶ Welcoming the assumption by UNOWAS of the good offices functions of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the Council requested specific reporting, including on the progress made by national stakeholders to implement the reform

²⁸² Estonia, Ireland, Kenya (also on behalf of Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Mexico and Viet Nam.

²⁸³ See [S/PRST/2021/3](#), seventh paragraph.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, eighth paragraph.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, tenth paragraph.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, twelfth paragraph.

agenda.²⁸⁷ In addition, encouraging cross-pillar efforts to foster greater coherence and coordination within the United Nations System as well as with partners in the region, the Council called on UNOWAS, to work with all elements of the United Nations system to strengthen integrated responses to the challenges facing the region.²⁸⁸

On 8 July 2021, Council members held a meeting under this item. During the meeting, the members of the Council heard briefings by the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS, and by the President of the Réseau Ivoirien pour la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme.²⁸⁹ The Special Representative of the Secretary-General presented the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOWAS,²⁹⁰ and on a regional tour during which he was able to meet with most of the Heads of State of country members of ECOWAS.²⁹¹ He highlighted that the security challenges created by terrorist acts in the Liptako-Gourma region and the Lake Chad basin, as well as by crime along the coasts of the Gulf of Guinea, had to be addressed from a regional perspective because the risks of a confluence between the threat coming from the sea and that coming from the Sahel were real, and the main victims were the civilian populations. Furthermore, he reported of a marked improvement in the coordination between the ECOWAS action plan, the regional stabilization strategy for the Lake Chad basin and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. On the challenges linked to the electoral processes, UNOWAS was also striving to improve exchanges between ministers of justice, judicial cooperation and the sharing of experiences among the main actors responsible for promoting the rule of law in the region in coordination with the ECOWAS Commission. In this context, he noted that the prospects for the elections in Cabo Verde and in the Gambia were looking more auspicious. The Special Representative further reported that they had increased the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality notably through the recently established Group of Friends of Women in the Sahel and transformed their approach to engaging with young people as agents of change and

²⁸⁷ Ibid., fifteenth paragraph.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., seventeenth paragraph. For further details on the mandate of UNOWAS, see part X, sect II.

²⁸⁹ See [S/PV.8814](#).

²⁹⁰ See [S/2021/612](#).

²⁹¹ See [S/PV.8814](#).

transformation, and not only as beneficiaries. In the face of persistent farmer-herder conflicts across the region, he noted that UNOWAS was collaborating with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel to identify priority areas for scaled-up United Nations action in 2021. Together with some United Nations agencies, the Office also launched a United Nations regional working group on climate change, security, environment and development with the objective to promote United Nations synergy and a harmonized approach to working with ECOWAS.

In her briefing, the President of the Réseau Ivoirien pour la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme noted that inequalities and challenges persisted, despite major advances made by the Ivorian Government and several West African countries. In her recommendations, she proposed putting in place holistic support programmes for girls to be able to attend, stay in and complete school, and adopting a multisectoral approach in resolving women's health issues to combat women's precarious health status and maternity-related mortality. To improve access to land ownership for women, she recommended guaranteeing legal remedies for women through better access to information and strengthened legal support. To combat gender-based violence, she further proposed that a specific law had to be adopted to punish violence against women, as well as a specific law to punish perpetrators and sponsors of early and forced marriages. In improving representation of women in decision-making bodies, she recommended that State institutions be strengthened to promote female leadership in politics, and their political representation increased through specific laws. Finally, for the safety of women in the face of the effects of climate change, she proposed that climate policies and programmes in West Africa be made gender-sensitive and to create dynamic mechanisms for taking initiatives and influencing decisions beyond numerical representation of women in climate policy processes.

During the deliberations, most Council members recognized the positive developments in terms of elections and democratic transitions in the region since the last meeting in January, despite security- and election-related challenges.²⁹² Many Council members also focused on combating terrorism and violence in the face of the increased terrorist attacks and increased

²⁹² Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, Russian Federation, United States, United Kingdom, Viet Nam, India, Estonia, Norway, China and France.

casualties, especially among civilians and peacekeepers,²⁹³ and several of them underscored additionally the importance of the protection of civilians.²⁹⁴ In terms of security, some Council members also stressed that predictable and sustainable funding had to be provided to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel.²⁹⁵ Furthermore, Council members reiterated their concern about the humanitarian situation in the region, including the level of impunity for human rights violations and abuses as well as food insecurity,²⁹⁶ and emphasized the need to increase assistance and contributions to the humanitarian response plans and operations.²⁹⁷ To address the challenges facing the region, Council members also highlighted the importance of a regional approach and coordination with other regional organizations, and encouraged UNOWAS to support and coordinate with regional countries and organizations such as ECOWAS and the African Union.²⁹⁸ Some Council members reiterated their support for holistic and integrated approaches, and advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.²⁹⁹ In this connection, several Council members highlighted ensuring education as key to the basis for strong nations, greater social mobility, the long-term stability of the society as well as combating the radicalization of young people.³⁰⁰ With regard to the impact of climate change, several Council members welcomed the work of UNOWAS and the regional working group,³⁰¹ and emphasized that climate-related threats as well as the fight against the effects of climate change had to be taken into account in all actions and conflict prevention efforts.³⁰² While welcoming the increased political representation of women in the region, some Council members reiterated the need to further ensure the full, equal

²⁹³ Niger, Ireland, Russian Federation, United States, Viet Nam, Mexico, India, Estonia, Norway, China and France.

²⁹⁴ United States, Mexico, Estonia and Norway.

²⁹⁵ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), India and France.

²⁹⁶ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

²⁹⁷ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), India and Viet Nam.

²⁹⁸ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Russian Federation, Mexico, India and China.

²⁹⁹ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Viet Nam, Mexico and China.

³⁰⁰ Ireland, Mexico, Estonia and Norway.

³⁰¹ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, United States and United Kingdom.

³⁰² Viet Nam and France.

and meaningful participation of women, and address their absence particularly from Cabinet tables and in the national governments and parliaments.³⁰³

On 17 August 2021, the Council held a meeting to issue a presidential statement in which it expressed concern at the deterioration of the security situation in some countries of the West Africa and Sahel region, growth of terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, as well as in the wider West African region, and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and encouraged further national and regional efforts to counter these threats.³⁰⁴ The Council also expressed great concern at the violent actions of non-State actors hampering the return of State authority, basic social services and rule of law in some areas of the region. In the presidential statement, the Council reaffirmed the importance of addressing the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in Africa, including by ensuring national recovery and reconstruction, enhancing good governance, and facilitating socioeconomic development in Africa including through job creation and promotion of entrepreneurship, and providing education and health care services for the promotion of the well-being of their people.³⁰⁵ Welcoming the feasibility assessment for a Joint Civilian Project to address intercommunal violence in the region and the recommendations by the Secretary-General, the Council encouraged the Secretary-General to leverage existing United Nations initiatives and mechanisms for integrated and cross-pillar actions with a view to initiate projects specifically dedicated to stemming intercommunal violence more tangibly, in close coordination with the African Union including its Mission for Mali and the Sahel, ECOWAS and G-5 Sahel.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, the Council expressed grave concern over the impact of the Libyan conflict on neighbouring countries particularly in the Sahel, and encouraged further international support and regional cooperation as well as coordination between Libya, neighbouring countries in the Sahel and relevant United Nations bodies.³⁰⁷ In the presidential statement, the Council also welcomed the enhanced cooperation between ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central

³⁰³ Niger (also on behalf of Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia), Ireland, Viet Nam, Estonia and Norway.

³⁰⁴ See [S/PRST/2021/16](#), third paragraph.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, fifth paragraph.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, sixth paragraph.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, eighth paragraph.

African States on the Gulf of Guinea and the commitment to reactivate regional coordination mechanisms for maritime safety, as well as ongoing efforts by ECOWAS to evaluate its Conflict Prevention Framework Plans of Action, and called for enhanced political support and engagement of the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel in accompanying this process to ensure its effective and meaningful operationalization in the countries of the region.³⁰⁸ Finally, the Council stressed that good governance was critical for long-term peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel, while reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of all States in the region and emphasizing the need to respect fully the principle of non-interference.³⁰⁹

Table 1
Meetings: Peace consolidation in West Africa

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8814 8 July 2021	Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2021/612)			Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, President of the Réseau Ivoirien pour la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant et de la Femme	12 Council members ^a , invitees	S/PRST/2021/16
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^a Niger spoke on behalf of Kenya, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., ninth paragraph.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., tenth paragraph.

Table 2
Videoconferences: Peace consolidation in West Africa

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
11 January 2021	S/2021/43	Letter dated 13 January 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
3 February 2021	No record (see A/76/2 , part II, chap. 31)		S/PRST/2021/3