

**Briefing to the Security Council on the Report of the Secretary-General  
on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel  
(UNOWAS), 1 July – 31 December 2016**

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Monsieur le Président, Distingués membres du Conseil,

1. C'est un honneur pour moi de me retrouver devant cette auguste assemblée, pour une mise à jour de la situation en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sahel. En complément au rapport du Secrétaire général sur les activités du Bureau des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel au cours de la période du 1<sup>er</sup> juillet au 31 décembre 2016, je voudrais vous informer des récents développements et tendances et de leur impact dans la région.

2. Pour commencer, je voudrais souligner que beaucoup de progrès ont été réalisés depuis notre dernière rencontre en juillet 2016. Notamment, les citoyennes et citoyens de la région ont démontré leur maturité et leur volonté d'exercer librement et pacifiquement leur droit de choisir leurs dirigeants. Je veux citer pour exemple le Cap-Vert et le Ghana, qui ont mené à bien des élections présidentielles, dans le strict respect des normes et standards en la matière, confirmant leur statut de modèle dans la région, et au-delà.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

3. On 1 December, voters waited patiently to cast their ballots in presidential elections in The Gambia, which took place against a backdrop of opposition members being in prison and a communication shutdown. I shared the joy of many witnessing the announcement of the results by the Independent Electoral Commission and the concession speech by President Yahya Jammeh on 2 December. Conversely, we were saddened by the quickly unfolding political crisis resulting from President Jammeh changing his mind and deciding to reject the results, citing irregularities, calling for fresh elections to be managed by a new independent Electoral Commission, and eventually lodging a petition aiming to invalidate the results of the December 1 polls.

4. On 13 December, I took part in the ECOWAS Heads of State mission to The Gambia and since then have been facilitating interactions and negotiations aimed at ensuring a peaceful

transfer of power from the outgoing President to President-elect Barrow. On 17 December, at the 50<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and government, ECOWAS agreed to uphold the results of the 1 December elections and decided to take all necessary actions to enforce the results. UNOWAS is fully involved in supporting the ECOWAS-led mediation, which continues to explore all avenues towards a peaceful transfer of power. A High-level delegation has returned to Banjul today, 13 January, in an attempt to persuade President Jammeh to abide by the elections results and step down. They plan to leave no doubt about the determination of ECOWAS to use all necessary means, including force, to have the will of the Gambian people upheld. Should this be deemed necessary, ECOWAS intends to seek the endorsement of the AU Peace and Security Commission and the formal approval of this Council to deploy troops to the Gambia.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

5. Despite a pre-election period that was at times marked by high political tension, the people of Ghana lived up to their reputation to hold elections that serve as an inspiration for the rising tide of democracy throughout the African continent. I salute outgoing President John Dramani Mahama for his gracious acceptance of the results, and I congratulate President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on his victory. While credit is due to the people of West Africa, I would also like to acknowledge the country's regional and international partners who jointly accompanied these important milestones.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

6. In Guinea, we are concerned that the local elections, which are forecast to take place in February 2017, in accordance with the terms of the 12 October Political Agreement, may be postponed. There is still a lack of consensus between the ruling party and the opposition, regarding the balloting system. Moreover, the amendments to the electoral code, which are needed to hold the elections in February 2017, were not adopted during the recent parliamentary session. In fact, the opposition Members of Parliament withdrew from the National Assembly on the last day of this session threatening to resume street protests. UNOWAS will continue to engage Guinean stakeholders on the imperative to implement the provisions of the 12 October agreement.

7. Elsewhere in the region, a number of countries are undertaking efforts to update their constitutions, and to build the foundations for prosperous, cohesive, and democratic societies. In line with the ECOWAS vision of moving from an *"ECOWAS of states"* to an *"ECOWAS of people"*, UNOWAS continues to encourage these efforts to take place in a spirit of dialogue and participation.

Mr. President, distinguished Council Members,

8. During the reporting period, several parents in Nigeria were reunited with their daughters, who had been captured by Boko Haram in the north-eastern town of Chibok some two years ago. Enhanced efforts are underway to release more of the abductees. Several hundred terrorists have also collectively surrendered to the authorities, in part, due to the

concerted efforts of troop contributing countries and partners supporting the Multi National Joint Task Force.

9. At the same time, the group's attacks have recently become more frequent, disrupting the return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons to their homes. With new areas liberated, the full extent of the tragedy has become all the more visible. Hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished, and may face starvation. While the UN has scaled up the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Lake Chad Basin countries, and in particular, in Borno State, Nigeria and Diffa Province, Niger, I am concerned that the Nigerian Humanitarian Response Plan remains less than 37 per cent funded. You would agree that we can and must do better.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

10. Amidst increasingly vocal internal demands for peace dividends to materialize, I call upon partners to support the democratic and economic consolidation of Burkina Faso, which finds itself in the middle of a volatile regional security environment. Our aim is to ensure that post conflict societies do not relapse into crisis, thus hurting peace consolidation and democratic gains. Last Friday, 6 January, in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, it was worrisome to see former fighters who had been integrated in the armed forces, try to take control of the locality of Bouaké on account of remuneration-related grievances.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

11. Looking forward, UNOWAS will enthusiastically contribute to the implementation of your Resolution 2282 (2016) and the General Assembly's Resolution on Sustaining Peace. My Office is an active member of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso and is contributing to the development of the sustaining peace strategy in this pilot country. My good offices and the technical-level support of UNOWAS will continue to provide support to this holistic United Nations approach in Burkina Faso and throughout West Africa and the Sahel.

12. My Office will also provide support on issues related to regional stabilization, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. As members are aware, the review of this Integrated Strategy, which you had mandated, was completed late last year. Taking a critical look at the challenges of coordination against a shifting implementation environment, we remain committed to promoting and coordinating a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of deprivation, exclusion, and insecurity.

13. In line with the recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel's Report on Peace Operations, the Secretary-General's Report on the future of UN peace operations, and the report of the UN Peacebuilding Review, we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with regional and sub-regional partners. To mention just a few examples, we have stepped up our partnership with the G-5 Sahel, including by facilitating cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and providing support to the G5- Regional Cell on the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism.

14. In support of the Cross-Border Security Strategy of the Mano River Union, we have facilitated platforms where representatives of the Joint Border Security and Confidence Building Units shared experiences in order to strengthen security and cooperation in a way that also binds in youth, women, and other community actors. This is but one example of an inclusive approach working together across institutions. In this regard, I call upon the Mano River Union Member States, as well as the broader international community, to provide the minimal resources required to maintain and expand the Units' operations.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

15. UNOWAS is collaborating closely with the other United Nations missions in the region and, in the context of the drawdown of the missions in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and Liberia (UNMIL), we are intensifying our collaboration and information-sharing at leadership and technical levels.

16. Before I conclude, Mr. President, allow me to mention that the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued the emplacement of pillars for the definitive demarcation of the border between those two countries, accompanied by confidence- building activities on both sides of the border. The Mixed Commission remains a shining example of what long-term commitment and effective cooperation can achieve.

Mr. President, Distinguished Council Members,

17. Rest assured that my Office will redouble its efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace in West Africa and the Sahel.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

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