



Security Council

Distr.: General
4 January 2022

Original: English

Report of the Security Council mission to Mali and the Niger, 23–25 October 2021

I. Introduction

1. The members of the Security Council carried out a mission to Mali and the Niger from 23 to 25 October 2021, co-led by France, Kenya and the Niger. The trip, which was undertaken during the Council presidency of Kenya, was the first since the beginning of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

2. The primary purpose of the Security Council mission to Mali was to reiterate the Council's support for the political transition in the country, the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and the development and implementation of a strategy to stabilize the centre of the country. The visit was further aimed at taking stock of the operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and discussing possible ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the tools put in place by the international community to support the Joint Force. The overall goal of the visit to the Niger was to take stock of the challenges faced by the country in the security, development and humanitarian domains, to learn from its experience with regard to the consolidation of peace and the strengthening of democratization, and to exchange views on how the Council can provide support in facing the ongoing challenges in the Niger and the broader Sahel region.

3. In Mali, the members of the Security Council met with members of the transitional Government of Mali, including the transitional President, Colonel Assimi Goïta; the Prime Minister, Choguel Maïga; the signatory armed groups; representatives of civil society; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), El Ghassim Wane; and representatives of the United Nations country team. In the Niger, the Council members met with the President, Mohamed Bazoum; the Prime Minister, Mahamadou Ouhoumoudou; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hassoumi Massoudou; other government officials; the Commander of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Major General Oumar Bikimo; and the United Nations country team. A ceremony in tribute to those who had lost their lives combating terrorism was held in Niamey.



II. Mali

A. Key issues

Political transition

4. The transitional President expressed his Government's commitment to the return of constitutional rule in the country. He explained that gaining the confidence of the Malian people and promoting reconciliation would be the priority and that it would be achieved by improving the security situation and initiating some key reforms. In that regard, he underlined the challenges that he considered his Government to be facing in order to organize the elections on 27 February 2022 and stated that the upcoming national dialogue on reform (*Assises nationales de la refondation*), to be held from October to December 2021, would prove essential to bring Malians together and set the path for taking Malian aspirations into account. That point was also highlighted by some civil society interlocutors who further called upon the international community and MINUSMA to support the political resolution of the crisis by ensuring that the participants in the dialogue could legitimately represent the Malian people.

5. Echoing the transitional President's focus on the importance of the national dialogue on reform, the Prime Minister stressed the urgency of engaging in the fight against impunity and corruption and undertaking profound political, institutional and security reforms. The national dialogue would represent a unique opportunity for all Malian political and social stakeholders to redefine the parameters of a "new" Mali. Members of the transitional Government outlined the efforts and the bottom-up approach in reaching political consensus on contentious issues relating to the electoral process. The Prime Minister said that the dialogue, the recommendations of which would be binding for all, should serve to define the timeline and framework for the upcoming elections.

6. The transitional authorities expressed the hope that the national dialogue on reform would bring about a social pact between the State and the population for sustainable peace in Mali, a sentiment echoed by several Malian interlocutors. While supporting a timely political transition, some civil society representatives argued that the exact timing of elections did not matter to many segments of the population as long as there was momentum for the elections to be organized. Some were of the view that the national dialogue could provide an appropriate forum for women, including those belonging to the signatory movements, to enhance their political legitimacy. The Special Representative for Mali highlighted that, through his good offices and in conjunction with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, MINUSMA would continue to advocate frank dialogue among national stakeholders in order to reach political consensus on the way forward while working to ensure greater synergy in the efforts between Mali and its partners towards the shared goal of a return to constitutional rule and the promise of lasting stability.

7. The members of the Security Council highlighted their willingness to hear directly from Malian interlocutors on how better to support Mali and work with national authorities. They reiterated their call for the Malian transitional authorities to achieve the political transition and the return to constitutional order within the agreed timeline set out in the transition charter and in accordance with the commitments of the transitional authorities and the decisions of ECOWAS of 30 May 2021 and of 16 September 2021. The Council stressed the need for a minimum level of national consensus, both on the reforms to be undertaken and on the conditions for the proper holding of elections. It further called upon all Malian stakeholders to prioritize building trust, engaging in dialogue and being willing to make compromises in order to achieve those objectives.

8. The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the mediation efforts of ECOWAS and the African Union and encouraged the continuation of dialogue between Mali and ECOWAS. Reiterating its call for the Malian authorities to respect the deadline of 27 February 2022 for elections, ECOWAS informed the delegation that the organization was awaiting the presentation of an electoral calendar by the end of October and that, if necessary, an extraordinary summit would be convened to take appropriate measures. Some Council members urged the Malian authorities to adhere to the election timeline to which they had previously committed with ECOWAS. During the Council's visit to the region, the transitional Government of Mali declared the Special Representative of ECOWAS in Mali *persona non grata* and gave him 72 hours to leave the country. Meanwhile, the representative of the African Union described the Union's priorities as supporting the political transition within the framework of the local monitoring committee, improving the security situation and promoting development.

Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

9. All Malian stakeholders reaffirmed their willingness to participate in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to reach a comprehensive and sustainable settlement of the recurring crisis. The Prime Minister commended the continued dialogue between signatory parties within the framework of the Agreement. The members of the Security Council recalled their firm commitment to the implementation of the Agreement and welcomed the steps taken in advancing that implementation but regretted its slow pace.

10. The Security Council was encouraged by the expressed commitment of the transitional Government to enact constitutional reforms in furtherance of the Agreement and called upon all the parties to the Agreement to work together towards the completion of the exercise during the 18-month transition process. The Council was also encouraged by the openness of the signatory parties to the international mediation team, under the leadership of Algeria, playing a more active role, including by exercising the team's arbitration role. The members of the Council met with women representatives of the signatory armed groups and reiterated the importance of ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all of the Agreement's implementing mechanisms.

11. The Ambassador of Algeria to Mali, the leader of the international mediation team, mentioned that, while significant progress had been made on the implementation of the Agreement, important issues remained to be finalized. The Security Council welcomed the renewed commitment of the transitional authorities to expediting the implementation of the Agreement, including the transitional Government's recent proposal to integrate 13,000 former rebel combatants into the army in the coming months. The Council stressed the great importance that it attached to the early conclusion of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and called upon the signatory movements to extend the necessary cooperation. It also underscored that results were needed with regard to the decentralization process in and development of the north. The Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform (Fahad wing) coalitions of armed groups deplored that, six years after the signing of the Agreement, peace dividends were sparse. They stressed that the development component had registered very little progress, accentuating the imbalance between the northern and southern regions of the country. Both groups linked the lack of progress to a perceived lack of political will on the part of the Malian authorities.

12. The Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad reiterated its call for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to shed light on the assassination of Sidi Brahim Ould Sidatt, then Chair of the coalition, in April 2021. The

Haballa wing of the Platform pleaded for more time to be granted to the transitional Government to prepare and hold elections under the proper conditions. Meanwhile, the Coordination des mouvements de l'inclusivité was particularly vocal about the low level of representation of women in the peace process. The Ambassador of Algeria to Mali made it clear that the Permanent Strategic Framework was a cross-movement initiative and that it should not interfere with the implementation of the Agreement.

Security and governance

13. All Malian and international interlocutors expressed serious concern over the security situation, with some voicing that Mali was at a crossroads. The transitional Government noted the support of MINUSMA to Mali while calling for a more robust mandate for the Mission to adapt to the escalating insecurity nationwide. The leadership of MINUSMA highlighted the continued degradation of the security situation, with 500 incidents since the start of 2021, more than in any other full year. Regular attacks targeted MINUSMA personnel, the Malian Defence and Security Forces and international partners, with civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict. In many zones, local communities now had no choice but to sign local agreements imposed by armed groups dictating rigorous conditions linked to religious practice and zakat.

14. MINUSMA described the way in which the volatile context shaped local perceptions and aspirations, which could be exploited. Populations aspired first and foremost to achieve security, with sometimes unrealistic expectations of what international actors could do. The criticisms emerging from this mismatch were often fuelled on social media and by misinformation, which made it hard to communicate the crucial impact of MINUSMA. Beyond security, populations also aspired to achieve access to basic services, for which MINUSMA could play a supporting role at most. Lastly, the population aspired to achieve improved governance, the serious shortcomings of which were seen as the main contributing factor to the current crisis.

15. The situation in the centre of the country was depicted as particularly problematic by Malian and international interlocutors, with devastating repercussions for the population, in terms not only of displacement but also of education. MINUSMA reported that about 250,000 children could not access schooling. There was also a lack of State presence, with only 16 per cent of prefects and sub-prefects deployed. MINUSMA was doing a great deal despite its limited resources, as it had only two battalions and one formed police unit in an area hosting 30 per cent of the Malian population. The members of the Security Council were encouraged by the intention of the Malian transitional authorities to agree on a comprehensive, politically led strategy to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence and re-establish State presence and authority as well as basic social services in central Mali. They urged the Malian transitional authorities to uphold their efforts to effectively implement that strategy by the end of the Mission's current mandate.

16. The Acting Force Commander of MINUSMA provided more details on the adaptation of the Force, noting that the MINUSMA military component was protecting villages and critical infrastructure against constant threats, helping to avoid new massacres in areas such as Ogossogou and Petaka and supporting the civilian component. He stressed that those efforts would be strengthened by additional capabilities, particularly in terms of quick reaction, specialized expertise with regard to improvised explosive devices, air assets and, most importantly, the means to achieve better situational awareness. The Police Commissioner of MINUSMA noted the role of the United Nations police in protecting civilians, most notably through the presence of formed police units and through important training and capacity-building efforts directed towards Malian institutions, including in the form of the construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure as well as co-location. The establishment of local policing and security committees, as well as the promotion of the presence of women as part of the State's redeployment efforts, was also highlighted.

17. The Security Council paid tribute to the 243 fallen MINUSMA peacekeepers, a stark reminder of the sacrifices made over the past eight years in the search for peace in Mali. The Special Representative for Mali gave a briefing on the hostile operational environment of MINUSMA, with 162 peacekeepers killed in hostile incidents out of a total of 240 deaths since 2013. Improvised explosive devices and mines were a constant danger, having killed 81 peacekeepers and wounded 571 to date, while frequent attacks against MINUSMA convoys and camps continued. In that context, the Special Representative explained that the Mission was enhancing its efforts to protect civilians while striving to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers. Moreover, he saw the proposed increase in the uniformed personnel ceiling recommended by the Secretary-General in his report of 15 July 2021 on the adaptation and authorized strength of MINUSMA (S/2021/657) as an absolute necessity owing to the dangers faced in the north and the lack of personnel in the centre, where MINUSMA protected vulnerable populations and guarded key infrastructure such as bridges, which were essential for mobility and the well-being of populations, while noting that it was up to the Council to make a decision on the proposed increase and encouraging its members to take Malian concerns into consideration. He highlighted the Mission's strong concern about the safety of the peacekeepers deployed in Tessalit, Kidal and Aguelhok following the reconfiguration of the Operation Barkhane force.

18. Turning to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel said that the Security Council should review the nature of support for the Force given the deteriorating security situation. He asked the Council to consider the possibility of establishing a logistical support office for the Force. He also reported that discussions were continuing within the African Union on the possibility of deploying 3,000 troops in support of the Force.

Human rights and humanitarian issues

19. In the context of heightened security and political challenges, some civil society representatives and international interlocutors considered that human rights ranked low in terms of government priorities. Members of the Security Council urged the Malian transitional authorities to continue their efforts to combat impunity for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.

20. Malian and international interlocutors highlighted the important humanitarian and economic repercussions of insecurity. MINUSMA offered an overview of the difficult humanitarian situation, noting that 4.7 million Malians needed humanitarian assistance and that about 42 per cent of the population currently lived in extreme poverty. There were approximately 400,000 internally displaced persons, half of whom were in the centre of the country. The number of internally displaced persons had more than doubled in the previous two years; of the total, 84 per cent were children (64 per cent) and women (20 per cent). There were also 150,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries.

21. MINUSMA deplored the new strategy of village encirclement used by terrorist groups, which was expected to significantly increase the number of Malians needing humanitarian assistance for that reason (currently 1.3 million), as villagers were now deprived of access to land. Beyond the attacks against development and humanitarian actors, vital infrastructure such as roads and bridges were now increasingly being targeted, while only 31.5 per cent of the \$563 million requested for the humanitarian response plan had been financed. The Mission noted the active role played in humanitarian aid delivery by Malian organizations, which were implementing 75 per cent of projects in the centre. MINUSMA highlighted the fact that political instability affected humanitarian efforts to advocate resources and underline the importance of humanitarian access in Mali.

22. Civil society representatives told the mission that a large part of the female population of Mali lived under the yoke of violent extremist groups, and not only in the centre of the country. In addition, the Security Council was told that reforms related to the rights of women were being set aside at the government and legislative levels, including the reform regarding gender-based violence which was recently discontinued. Meanwhile, civil society representatives recalled that 70 per cent of Malians were under the age of 40, making younger generations the primary victims of the crisis in the country. As the situation continued to deteriorate, young people were losing hope for a decent life and risked falling into radicalization to violence.

23. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the demographic data for Mali put the population at 21 million. Around 52 per cent of the population was under 15 (with one in two Malians under the age of 15). Therefore, one of the main challenges was the closure of 1,664 schools out of a total of 6,137 owing to insecurity, which affected the schooling of around 500,000 children. Meanwhile, women 15 to 49 years of age (women of reproductive age) represented around 21 per cent of the total population. Of those, 72 per cent could not read or write. Other United Nations country team members focused their presentations on the recruitment of children by armed groups, access to the population and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, it was highlighted that the combined effects of the pandemic and the sociopolitical crisis had led to a recession in the Malian economy and an acceleration of public debt in 2020. The economic slowdown had brought an end to a decade of progress on poverty reduction, pushing an additional 900,000 people into poverty.

B. Observations

24. The visit to Mali was a further manifestation of the Security Council's engagement on the country and determination to help Mali to overcome the challenges confronting it. Members of the Council had travelled to Mali against the backdrop of uncertainties about the timely holding of elections. They reiterated their call upon the Malian transitional authorities to achieve the political transition, the return to constitutional order and the handover of power to democratically elected civilian authorities within the agreed timeline set out in the transition charter and in accordance with the commitments of the transitional authorities and the decisions of ECOWAS of 30 May 2021 and of 16 September 2021. While noting the work done by the transitional authorities to foster dialogue and lay the foundations for reforms, the members of the Council reiterated the importance of respecting the timeline for the organization of free and fair elections, as requested by ECOWAS, set out in Council resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#) and agreed by the transitional authorities. The members of the Council urged the transitional authorities to present a timetable to that end.

25. The Security Council was encouraged by the recent commitments made by the transitional authorities on advancing the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and urged the Malian transitional authorities and the signatory armed groups to make further progress to effectively fulfil the priority measures referred to in paragraph 4 of Council resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#) before the end of the current MINUSMA mandate. Despite collective efforts, the security situation has deteriorated, and the political crisis persists. The Security Council visit shed further light on the importance of promoting a shared vision among Malians and their partners that would form the basis for promoting inclusive dialogue, completing the transition, fully implementing the Agreement and restoring security. Meanwhile, according to its mandate, MINUSMA will continue to reassess and recalibrate its approach in order to adapt to the development of the situation and support the Malian people's aspirations for peace and stability.

III. Niger

A. Key issues

Security situation

26. All of the interlocutors who met in Niamey highlighted that improving the security situation was among the top priorities in the Niger. At his meeting with the members of the Security Council, the President of the Niger stressed that the country retained control of its territory but remained the target of external threats originating mainly from neighbouring countries. He expressed serious concerns over the deteriorating security situation in Mali, which affected the prospects of stability for the whole region. The President further stated that no Nigerien nationals led the armed groups operating in the region, making any possibility of dialogue unwarranted. He reported that the Nigerien army had re-established forward outposts in the Liptako-Gourma region and was developing mechanisms to protect civilians and stabilize the area.

27. Recalling that the Nigerien army had tripled in size since 2011 at significant cost to the State budget, the President stressed the need for additional support to secure more troops, weapons, equipment (especially air assets) and technology. In addition to strengthening its army, the Niger was prioritizing good governance to confront the menace of terrorism. Noting that the country was moving progressively towards a post-conflict scenario, he called for increased United Nations support to tackle the challenges of that new phase.

28. The Prime Minister reiterated the country's commitment to regional security and to its own territorial integrity. In highlighting the challenges faced by the Niger in ensuring the requisite funding for its security, he highlighted that the fight against terrorism should be an international effort and called for additional support to the country, which was at the front line of that struggle. He noted that the strategies and policies of the Niger were aligned with the framework for international action of the Coalition for the Sahel and its four complementary pillars.

29. The Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked that the Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad basin regions were the main epicentres of insecurity. He stated that, in the Lake Chad basin region, the armed groups had been degraded and safe conditions had been re-established to the extent that the Government of the Niger was proceeding with the voluntary return of displaced people. He stressed that the Multinational Joint Task Force had played a key role in addressing the terrorist threat in the area. The Force funding mechanism, whereby one country (Nigeria) supported the Force operations financially, had proved successful. The Minister noted that, in the Liptako-Gourma region, the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin currently constituted the main threat, since the killing of senior members of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, including Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, had significantly weakened the group.

30. Regarding the cost of security, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that defence and security spending had increased from 5 per cent of the State budget in 2010 to almost 20 per cent in 2020, amounting to more than 2 per cent of gross domestic product. He requested the Security Council to find a mechanism to provide lasting and predictable funding for counter-terrorism efforts. He added that, with only a fraction of the funds allocated to MINUSMA, the Niger could achieve remarkable results.

31. With regard to the situation in Mali, the President said that the increasing political and security crisis deeply affected neighbouring countries. He noted that, unlike the transitional authorities of Mali, the Government of the Niger enjoyed democratic legitimacy, and he stressed the need for Bamako to better combat terrorism and foster joint counter-terrorism operations. Considering the defiant

posture of the transitional authorities regarding regional and international partners, he expressed concern over the potential consequences of the posture for the effective and sustainable operationalization of the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was sceptical about the goodwill of the transitional authorities with regard to respecting the deadline of 27 February 2022 set by ECOWAS for the holding of elections. Noting that meaningful reforms would take years to complete, he questioned the rationale for prioritizing the national dialogue on reform and condemned the expulsion of the Special Representative in Mali. In that context, he reiterated the alignment of the Niger with ECOWAS and its attachment to the agreed commitments, adding that an ambitious programme of reforms should only be undertaken by a democratically elected Government.

Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

32. The visit to the joint command mechanism in the central sector provided an opportunity for the Commander of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, Major General Oumar Bikimo, and his staff to brief the Security Council members on the operational context and the significant challenges faced by the Force. Regarding the operational context, General Bikimo's staff remarked that the western sector was characterized by the presence of the Al Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, which was structured in multiple emirates. The emirate of Macina, led by Amadou Koufa, had extended its influence from central Mali towards the north-west up to the border with Mauritania. Over the past two months, the security situation in the western sector had been calm. However, the presence of armed groups had been reported in the vicinity of the Wagadou forest. Armed groups had been spotted stocking up on food in the markets in preparation for the winter season, which reduced mobility and the availability of food in that hard-to-reach area.

33. The eastern sector had experienced increasing episodes of banditry following the fall of the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi. Owing to its size, low population density and the wealth of its subsoil, with multiple artisanal gold-panning sites, the area near the borders with Chad, Libya and the Niger remained coveted by armed groups for the trafficking of people, drugs and weapons. However, a lull had been registered in the activities of armed groups in the sector over the past two months. Meanwhile, in the north, the threat posed by mercenaries from Libya persisted.

34. The central sector remained the most active zone of the Force's area of operations. Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin was still present in the area around the Boulikessi and towards the Foulseré forest and had extended its operations to the north-west of Burkina Faso, where it had engaged in raids against the Burkinabe defence and security forces. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara was concentrated along the banks of the Niger River near the villages of Ouarara, Salata, Ouatagouna and Tessit, engaging in exactions against civilian populations.

35. According to the Commander, the main challenges for the Joint Force included: (a) strengthening command, liaison and coordination across the Force; (b) guaranteeing the protection of operations, troops and equipment; (c) establishing aerial capabilities; (d) establishing the Force's intelligence and surveillance capability; (e) guaranteeing the Force's logistical autonomy; (f) increasing support to the population; and (g) developing psychological operations. Considering the challenges at hand, he explained that his vision for the Force campaign plan was articulated along four axes: (a) strengthened operationalization of the Force, in terms of both means and procedures, to destroy or degrade the armed groups; (b) the establishment of structured cooperation with partners; (c) increased protection and reactivity of the Force units; and (d) the raising of awareness of the Force and the promotion of better integration between the Force and the local population.

36. The Commander emphasized the complexity of the war that the Joint Force was fighting and underlined the importance of building close collaboration with the population. He stated that the Force was strengthening its mechanism to ensure human rights compliance and the integration of a judiciary component into the military operations of the Force. He thanked the international partners for their support and underlined the need for the Force to build its own capacity in terms of logistical and aerial support, surveillance and intelligence gathering. The Minister for Foreign Affairs advocated the creation of a dedicated office to support the Force, and the Commander said that he would support the creation of the office if the Security Council so decided, a position echoed by some members of the Council. Others reiterated their reservations about the United Nations funding a counter-terrorism force, and encouraged alternative multilateral or bilateral support options.

Development and humanitarian challenges

37. The President gave a briefing on the ongoing efforts of the Government aimed at facilitating the voluntary return of displaced people to Diffa. He acknowledged that episodes of violence against returnees had occurred and reported that the Government was working to guarantee a safe environment. He further reported that the Niger intended to complete, by the end of December, the safe return to Nigeria of the refugees hosted in Diffa and that collaboration to that effect was ongoing with the authorities of the Nigerian State of Borno.

38. The President pointed to education as one of his top priorities and the solution to the country's main problems, notably with regard to development, poverty and record demographic growth. He explained that promoting the education of women and girls would contribute to ending early marriage and early pregnancy. Moreover, focusing on education and vocational training would provide young people with skills for jobs and allow them to escape the clutches of violent extremism. Stressing the importance of international support to education and training, he remarked that the Niger was still affected by the fallout of the international structural adjustment programmes adopted in the 1980s and 1990s. Those programmes had led to a drastic reduction in personnel in the public education sector, which did not match the increasingly high demand for education driven by the country's extraordinary population growth.

39. At a lunch hosted by the Resident Coordinator ad interim, Diana Ofwona, Ms. Ofwona read a message from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Annadif Khatir Mahamat Saleh, in which he conveyed the importance of close cooperation within subregional organizations to tackle the enormous challenges of the Sahel. In the message, he remarked that more needed to be done to protect civilians and noted that weak governance, which was a driver of instability and social unrest, must be addressed by democratic governments. That was the key to restoring public confidence. The United Nations, through its integrated strategy for the Sahel, and partners were supporting national Governments in addressing those issues.

40. The Resident Coordinator a.i. and the United Nations country team representatives briefed the Security Council on the work of the United Nations in a complex non-mission setting characterized by multiple security, development and humanitarian challenges. Ms. Ofwona praised the collaboration between the United Nations and the Government of the Niger and reported that the country team was finalizing the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, reflecting the contributions of the United Nations system in the Niger and shaping the configuration of United Nations assets required inside and outside the country. She also briefed the Council members on the stabilization facilities, led by the United Nations Development Programme, that had been established to support the restoration of State authority in the Lake Chad basin and Liptako-Gourma regions.

41. Against a backdrop of constrained access due to insecurity and low funding levels, United Nations country team members informed the Security Council representatives about the challenges faced by the United Nations in responding to the growing needs stemming from the confluence of acute shocks, such as droughts, seasonal flooding, cholera outbreaks and food shortages. The members further noted that only 30 per cent of the humanitarian response was funded and that two thirds of the beneficiaries could not be assisted. The members expressed concern about the situation of children and young people, especially girls, who faced restrictions on access to education for security reasons, mainly in the regions of Tillabéri, Diffa and Tahoua, and expressed the urgent need for action and greater support for education, particularly in the context of increased insecurity.

42. The United Nations country team also stated that, since the majority of the country's population depended on agriculture and livestock, the fallout from climate change, notably increasing land degradation and unpredictable weather patterns, was particularly severe in the Niger. Moreover, the impact of climate change was leading to migration and the displacement of people and having an impact on the rights to food, health and livelihood. Against that backdrop, the level of resources for the Niger still did not correspond to the magnitude of the challenges at hand, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals could be at risk during the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. Some Security Council members noted the importance of close cooperation with all stakeholders and the application of internationally recognized best practices to ensure the sustainability of measures for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

43. The country team further noted the importance of promoting cross-border and regional cooperation for stability and development, investing more in conflict prevention and the promotion of justice and human rights, redoubling efforts towards inclusive and equitable growth, addressing humanitarian needs and building resilience to climate change, and promoting development programmes that met the needs of the population and restored public services in the affected areas.

B. Observations

44. The Security Council travelled to Niamey to gain a deeper understanding of the security, development and humanitarian situation in the Niger and the Sahel region in order to better identify current needs and define the ways in which the Council could provide the requisite support. The Council members also wanted to express their deepest condolences to the people and Government of the Niger for the victims of terrorist attacks, extend sympathy to the bereaved families and reiterate that those heinous acts would not undermine the determination of the Council to continue to support peace and stability in the region.

45. In the course of the visit, the Security Council took note of the significant progress that the Niger had achieved despite the enormous challenges that it continued to face. Council members commended the Niger for its democratic accomplishments, making the country a role model for the entire region and beyond. They also congratulated the Niger on its remarkable contribution to the work of the Council as a non-permanent member, as well as on its role in ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel.

46. Security Council members also welcomed the strong commitment of the Government of the Niger to security and education, particularly of women and girls, and reiterated their support for the efforts of all bilateral and multilateral partners supporting the Niger in its quest for peace, security, development and stability.