



Security Council

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Letter dated 20 January 2026 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the current mandate of which expires on 31 January 2026.

Since its establishment in 2016, UNOWAS has contributed to conflict prevention and management initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel, including through the good offices of my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel. The special political mission has been instrumental in preventing and mitigating election- and transition-related tensions and promoting inclusive political dialogue processes in the subregion. In this context, it has continued to facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice judgment of 10 October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. UNOWAS has enhanced the United Nations partnership with subregional and regional organizations, in particular the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Accra Initiative, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the African Union and the African Development Bank. UNOWAS has also leveraged its convening role to ensure coordination among United Nations entities and other partners, including towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (see [S/2013/354](#), endorsed by the Security Council in June 2013). Finally, it has contributed to the promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution initiatives in the subregion.

The efforts carried out by UNOWAS could not have yielded results without the engagement of regional Member States. I welcome the resolve of West African and Sahel Member States, as well as Mauritania, in addressing the multidimensional challenges that they face and their continued collaboration with the United Nations.

I also commend ECOWAS for its contributions to peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel, notably its unrelenting efforts for the promotion and consolidation of democracy, good governance, youth participation and gender equality amid persistent security and climate change-related challenges.

Notwithstanding progress made in the consolidation of peace, the region continues to face notable challenges that require continued United Nations support, especially in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peace consolidation. Furthermore, continued good offices engagement is essential to support the rebuilding of trust between ECOWAS and the Confederation of Sahel States, as well as among



neighbouring States in the West African region, to promote regional security cooperation, address humanitarian needs, preserve democratic gains and tackle other common challenges.

I therefore recommend that the mandate of UNOWAS be extended for a period of three years, from 1 February 2026 to 31 January 2029. During this time frame, given the evolving regional context as well as the impact of the implementation of the UN80 Initiative on the Office, an independent strategic review of the scope of the mandate and activities of UNOWAS will be conducted.

I submit herewith the draft mandate of UNOWAS, in which four core objectives are described (see annex). These mandated tasks are to be implemented in partnership with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, the Accra Initiative, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other international, regional and subregional partners, to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel and to promote an integrated approach to conflict prevention and regional issues.

UNOWAS will continue to work in close collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, including on issues related to piracy and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, on cross-border transhumance and on the impact of the activities of Boko Haram on countries of the Lake Chad basin region.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**

Annex

Proposed mandate for the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Objective 1

Monitor political developments in West Africa and the Sahel and carry out good offices and special assignments on behalf of the Secretary-General to support conflict prevention, peacebuilding, sustaining peace and mediation efforts in the subregion, in partnership with regional and subregional entities and other national and international actors, while mindful of the sustainable development context in the region.

Function 1.1

Monitor and analyse the situation in West Africa and the Sahel, in particular the impact of underlying causes of conflict and emerging threats to peace and security, and provide the Secretary-General, the Security Council, regional and subregional organizations and national Governments with early warnings, updates on the humanitarian situation and constraints on humanitarian access, and recommendations for preventive action.

Function 1.2

Perform good offices roles in West Africa and the Sahel to prevent conflicts and election- and transition-related tensions, sustain peace and consolidate peacebuilding efforts and political stability, based on the rule of law, in partnership with regional and subregional entities and other actors, as relevant.

Function 1.3

Support conflict prevention and peace consolidation efforts in countries in West Africa and the Sahel in partnership with regional and subregional entities and other actors, in close cooperation with the Regional Collaborative Platform and United Nations country teams in the region.

Function 1.4

Enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention, management and resolution, mediation and good offices, mindful of the sustainable development context in West Africa and the Sahel, promoting the women and peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda, including by providing support to existing subregional mechanisms, in coordination with international donors, to promote conditions and capacities for sustainable peace and development.

Function 1.5

Facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice judgment of 10 October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Objective 2

Enhance regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, in particular with regional and subregional entities, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Accra Initiative, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the African Development Bank.

Function 2.1

Raise awareness of, and promote integrated and holistic subregional and cross-border responses to emerging threats to peace, security and stability, in collaboration with sustainable development efforts in West Africa and the Sahel and, in the Lake Chad basin region, in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, mindful of the need for coordination with and between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States.

Function 2.2

Support the development and strengthening of networks of practitioners and subregional frameworks and mechanisms to address challenges related to security sector reform, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking, conflict between farmers and herders, conflict concerning natural resources management, terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, piracy and other forms of maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea.

Function 2.3

Collate and analyse data on, and/or, where appropriate, conduct regional research on and gender-sensitive analysis of, transnational issues relevant to peace and security and the links to human rights, humanitarian action and sustainable development, in collaboration with the Regional Collaborative Platform, resident coordinators, humanitarian coordinators, United Nations country teams and other United Nations entities, as well as with international partners, regional and subregional organizations, think tanks and civil society.

Function 2.4

Take into consideration the adverse implications of climate change, energy poverty, ecological changes and natural disasters, among other factors, including by assisting the Governments of the region and the United Nations system in undertaking risk assessments and risk management strategies relating to those factors.

Objective 3

Support, through political advocacy and playing a convening role, the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, enhance collaboration across the United Nations system and promote coherence in the international and regional response to the root causes and impact of conflict in the Sahel.

Function 3.1

Provide political and strategic leadership to the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel through its three strategic pillars, namely, governance, security and resilience.

Function 3.2

Facilitate United Nations system-wide integrated collaboration and coordination at the regional level, including through joint gender-sensitive analysis, planning and strategy development through a cross-pillar approach, to promote a coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to current and emerging threats, to address the root causes of instability and conflict in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 3.3

Drawing upon the prevention and sustaining peace agenda, work with the Regional Collaborative Platform, the United Nations resident coordinators and country teams in the subregion to contribute to an integrated analysis and joined-up action to tackle increasingly complex and interrelated peace and security dynamics in the region.

Function 3.4

Contribute to efforts aimed at sustaining international engagement in support of the Sahel and help to coordinate the various Sahel strategies and the efforts of international partners, including by continued support for ECOWAS.

Function 3.5

Support and promote enhanced regional cooperation for the fulfilment of the objectives of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Objective 4

Promote good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 4.1

Promote social cohesion and inclusive political dialogue, including by facilitating the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices among national Governments, regional organizations, civil society and other entities and by providing support for the building of local and national capacities to foster peace and for strengthening rule of law institutions, and promote good governance, by promoting dialogue and mediation at the community, local and national levels, by facilitating full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women, young people and other relevant stakeholders and by improving electoral processes.

Function 4.2

Provide support for the enactment of resolutions and frameworks of action pertaining to the respect for human rights in conflict prevention and conflict management initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel.

Function 4.3

Provide support to national Governments, regional organizations and institutions and civil society to mainstream a gender perspective in conflict prevention and management initiatives, as recognized by the Security Council in its resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, as well as in its resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on youth, peace and security.